# STREET SPIRIT

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JUSTICE NEWS & HOMELESS BLUES IN THE BAY AREA


## Meet the Future Homeless Residents of Santa Cruz

**Many of the future homeless of Santa Cruz are infant to school-age children from 48 Beach Flats families who are to be displaced by a Santa Cruz redevelopment project.**

**by Roxanne Acquistapace**

There are 200 of them at risk. Most do not speak any English nor can they fill out a housing application in English. They do not have any credit references and none of their personal references speak English when contacted by a prospective landlord by phone. They earn only minimum wage.

Many of the future homeless of Santa Cruz are infant to school-age children. They are members of 48 Beach Flats families who are to be displaced by a Santa Cruz City Redevelopment project known as the Dolphin-Lee project. Previously, these families have all been able to live without government-subsidized rents by sharing rents, childcare, and living expenses with friends or relatives.

Now the hucksters are down in the Beach Flats shucking and jiving like late-night infomercial salesman promising the residents of the Dolphin and Lee apartments anything they want to hear.

"Yes, your boyfriend and your cousin and her three children from San Salvador can continue to live with you," they pledge. "Yes, you will have a brand new three-bedroom apartment for less than you pay now."

"Yes, we will help you find a house for the year of construction and then you will definitely be guaranteed return."

"Yes, we will rent any moving truck for you to relocate to and from the new project. We don't care what it costs. You will not have to move yourself." "The drug dealers and street criminals will leave the neighborhood."

"NO PROBLEM" is the mantra of the pale faces. The critical guarantees are not in writing anywhere. And when those dislocated from this housing don't qualify for that swell new housing, they may find themselves living in cars or dumpsters.

The land will be snatched (by eminent domain) from two mixed-race families that have owned apartments in this area for many years. The smaller property owned by the Lees is filled with many of their own family members, including grandchildren. They are insulted, and rightly so, when politicians tell the public that their property is not a fit place to live.

They raised their own children here and their children are raising their children here. They are a very proud family with a lawyer, and they are determined not to lose their land.

Who ever heard of taking low-cost

*See* **Meet the Future Homeless** *page 23*



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

## Respite Care: The Time to Act Is Now

**Alameda County has failed to create respite care facilities for sick homeless people dumped from area hospitals. It's past time to study the humane models of respite care created in Washington, D.C., Chicago and Boston.**

**by Lydia Gans**

Medical respite care for the homeless, a place to recuperate after a hospital stay for surgery or illnesses — it seems such an obvious and fundamental need. Everyone knows that people are discharged from hospitals while they are still in a fragile condition. They need rest, proper diet and a certain amount of medical supervision.

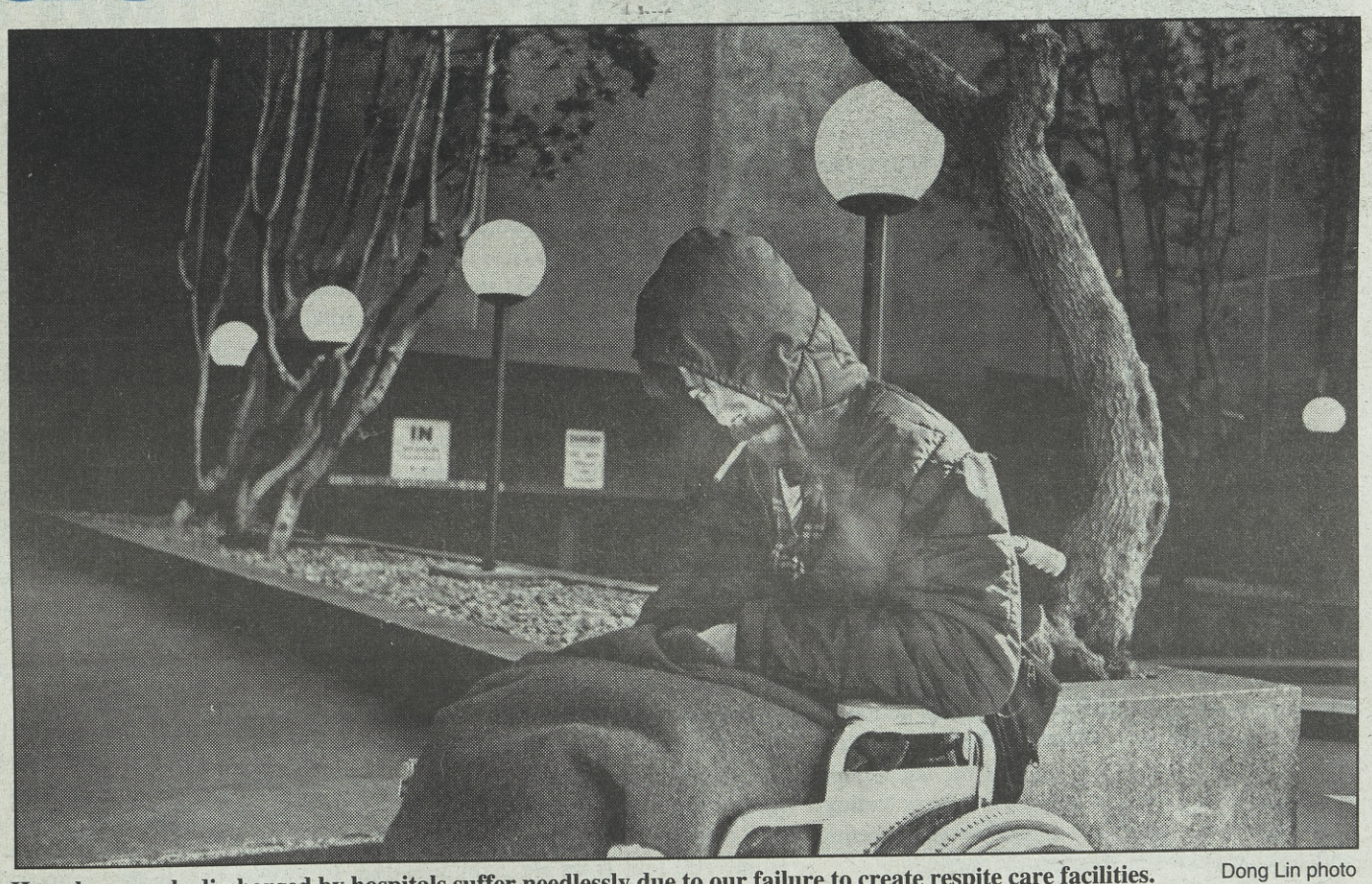
This past December, the National Health Care for the Homeless Council issued a report making a strong case for the need for medical respite programs until "everyone has access to appropriate, affordable health care and a home in which to get well."

Medical respite care for homeless people is not a new concept. G.G. Greenhouse, director of Alameda County's Health Care for The Homeless, saw the need and first appealed to Washington, D.C., for funding in 1988 when she started working in the field. She is still writing proposals for funding as the need becomes increasingly urgent.

Everyone knows that it takes time to fully recover from a hospital experience. We don't need studies to establish these truths, we know from experience. And those who work with homeless people in the East Bay know that the situation is getting worse. Hospitals are discharging their patients after increasingly shorter stays for recovery. The medical business establishment makes no secret of that.

The January and February issues of *Street Spirit* have highlighted the need to establish a program of medical respite

*See* **Models of Respite Care** *page 23*



**Homeless people discharged by hospitals suffer needlessly due to our failure to create respite care facilities.** Dong Lin photo

# When Mercy and Charity Are Evicted

**What will happen to the 200 people now housed at Dolphin-Lee? Current residents will be given "preference," but if they are illegal immigrants or their income is insufficient, or their household is too large, or their credit rating is not good enough, will they be readmitted?**

**by Becky Johnson**

Well within earshot of the screaming rollercoaster patrons at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk sit the tiny, but packed apartments of the Dolphin and the Lee properties. Within these two converted motels, 48 families with 200 members live; some have been here for the last 25 years. One hundred percent of the 48 families are Spanish-speaking. It is some of the last, truly affordable, privately owned housing in Santa Cruz. Now it is slated to be destroyed to make way for a new, affordable housing project called the "Dolphin-Lee."

In the spring of 1999 at a public meeting in the Beach Flats neighborhood, City Councilmembers Keith Sugar, Christopher Krohn, and Tim Fitzmaurice all assured nervous residents that, as Sugar put it, "There is no Dolphin-Lee project."

At a vastly under-attended meeting six months later, in October, 1999, the councilmembers said that the Dolphin-Lee project, promoted by the Catholic nonprofit development agency, Mercy Charities Housing, Inc., was coming up at City Council as one of five possible projects on the Redevelopment Agency's drawing board.

Days later, at the October 26th City Council meeting — attended by none of the 200 residents of the Dolphin-Lee apartments — Councilmember Katherine Beiers forced through a unanimous proposal to make the Dolphin-Lee Project the second priority for the City, and the only project on the table for building affordable housing in the Beach Flats.

The City Council made no Spanish-language materials available and no significant input was received on the five alternatives from the community or from the Dolphin-Lee residents.

Just when did the Dolphin-Lee project begin? *Early this year, city officials announced the formation of a Project Advisory Committee. Foul!* claimed activists all over the city, who cited Redevelopment law, State laws, the California State Constitution, and Federal requirements on any funds used as important matters overlooked by city officials, omissions which could scuttle the whole project.

"Redevelopment law requires that a Project Area Committee including members who will be the most affected by the project be formed at the beginning of the planning process," said former Beach Flats resident Scott Graham.

Suggested organizations to make up the Project Advisory Committee are, not surprisingly, all in favor of the project — such as Dominican Hospital and Holy Cross Church. La Famiglia and Barrios Unidos, also on the list, are on the City's payroll. Missing from the list are groups opposed to the removal of low-cost housing: the Beach Flats Neighborhood Association, the Beach Area Working Group, Western Service Workers and Homeless United for Friendship and Freedom.

An even greater issue is the damage caused by destroying affordable housing to build the so-called Dolphin-Lee development. With 48 units in the Dolphin-Lee properties and another 15, now-empty units at the "Pink Palace" owned by Seaside Company, all to be destroyed to build a brand new, 50-to-60-unit housing project, the plan would result in a net *loss* of 13 units of affordable housing.

With a $12.5 million dollar price tag, this project will consume *five years* worth of redevelopment money. And the new units could not be rented for the amounts the current residents of the Dolphin-Lee are now paying: $415 per month for a studio and $700 for a one-bedroom.

Phil Baer of the Beach Flats Neighborhood Association said, "They could spend $25,000 apiece refurbishing each unit of the 63 units that are now slated for destruction, spend one and a half million, and still have $11 million left over to build affordable housing. This project makes no sense." Pointing to a large field owned by the Seaside Company and still zoned residential, he said: "Why not build on vacant land, and then you don't have to relocate anyone?"

*Santa Cruz has a critical shortage of housing, both affordable and otherwise.* Pressures from over 10,000 students at the University of California, Santa Cruz (only 6000 are housed on campus) impact the housing stock for local residents. For a low-end, two-bedroom unit, rents begin at $1200 a month.

Relocation costs for 200-plus people would be high,

*See* **Mercy and Charity Evicted** *page 23*



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

## Just Justice

**by Michael Creedon**

**Your thing**
**Is going shopping at the funky unique shops on Telegraph,**
**Like Mars or maybe Shattuck, like even square Eddie Bauer's.**
**Their thing**
**Is asking you for money so they can eat today.**
**They won't get enough to rent a space to sleep.**

**It's just justice.**
**Just give them something.**

# San Jose Housing Protest Ends In 23 Arrests

**by Robert Norse**

In the second action of a "Poor People's Campaign" organized by Rev. Scott Wagers, 23 people were arrested in San Jose City Council Chambers on February 15, as they stood before the public microphone awaiting a reply to their demands for housing from Mayor Ron Gonzales.

Announcing they were ready to use the nonviolent, civil disobedience tactics of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the Community Homeless Alliance Ministry (CHAM) leader led the group in prayer as Mayor Gonzales and the City Council declared a recess and vacated the chamber. They were replaced by 17 policemen, who used pain-compliance holds on several of the protesters to force them to move.

Nearly 100 supporters showed up of all ages and colors, and all walks of life, to pray and sing in the San Jose Council Chambers as the police led the San Jose 23 away into custody.

Wagers and the protesters demanded that Gonzales commit himself to immediate action to address the shortage of affordable housing, critical lack of shelter space and services for the 20,000 homeless people on the streets in Silicon Valley. Gonzales offered the protesters a downstairs meeting with an aide and motel vouchers for the night.

Mayor Ron Gonzales was last visited by CHAM congregation members and supporters on January 26 when 15 people were arrested for nonviolently occupying the mayor's office for three hours. Gonzales has steadfastly refused to meet with CHAM or take any action on affordable housing in spite of huge expenditures on gentrification projects in San Jose.

CHAM has called for city officials to immediately provide shelter for all homeless people on the streets of San Jose, to allocate $5 million to a housing-for-families program, and to establish a realistic long-range housing policy for the city.

Accusing the mayor of indifference to the poor, Wagers said that resources must be found to meet the needs of those forced to live on the streets in one of the wealthiest cities in the state. Many renters also face the specter of eviction because of prohibitive rent increases and housing speculation.

Among those arrested were Adrienne Lawton, Rev. Larry Sweeney, Judith Light, Robert Norse, homeless mom Christy Wong, Lennox Sweeney, Sandy Perry, Nancy Nichols Chase, Roy Stevens, Paul Schusser, Albert Sandoval, Rev. Wagers and 11 others, including a disabled man in a wheelchair.

The San Jose 23 were cited for "disrupting a public meeting"— a misdemeanor carrying penalties of up to six months in jail and/or $1000 fine. They were released the same evening on their promise to appear in court in early March.

A week after this protest, Wagers announced a third planned action targeting the Fairmont Hotel. The Fairmont is notorious as a luxury hotel that has eaten up $13 million in city subsidies. San Jose spent that amount to relocate the nearby Montgomery Hotel 100 feet from its prior location, to allow expansion space for the Fairmont. The Montgomery is a former SRO hotel that has lain vacant for years in spite of the demands of homeless activists that it be reopened to public use.

Call Mayor Gonzales at (408) 277-4237 to urge his support for the housing goals of the homeless community. For more information, call Rev. Wagers at (408) 345-2353, or CHAM at (408) 454-0378.

## Truth Is A Sword

**by Gaverick Matheny, (PEN)**

In 39 U.S. states, gay men and lesbians can be legally dismissed from their jobs because of their sexual orientation.
Amnesty International, *U.S. Human Rights Report*, 1998.

21 U.S. states have sodomy laws that may require same-sex victims to confess to a crime in order to prove they are in a domestic relationship.
*American Bar Association Journal*, February 1998.

About 400,000 same-sex couples live together in California. The percentage of gay men and lesbians living with partners is the same as the percentage of heterosexual adults living with partners: approximately 60%.
U.S. Census, Current Population Reports, 1998, extrapolated from 1990 Census Public Use Microdata Sample.

"Not a single study has found children of gay and lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to the children of heterosexual parents. Indeed, the evidence suggests that home environments provided by gay and lesbian parents are as likely as those provided by heterosexual parents to support and enable children's psychological growth."
American Psychological Association, "Lesbian and Gay Parenting: A Resource for Psychologists."

Rights automatically granted to opposite-sex marriages in California, not granted to same-sex unions: Right to be appointed guardian of ailing or injured partner; right not to testify against a partner in a trial; right to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave from work in order to care for a sick partner or child; right to visit partner in state correctional facilities; right to be considered a 'parent' with child custody and visitation rights that flow from that designation; right to financial support during partnership; right to be appointed administrator or to inherit property of a deceased partner who died without a will; right to seek civil damages for the wrongful death of a partner; right to file joint tax returns.
Source: State of California, Prob., Gov., IRC, and Fam. Codes, 1999.

Public Education Network (PEN) is a clearinghouse of information on domestic and global problems. Visit PEN's webpage at http://www.penpress.org.

# S.F. LUXURY HOTELS GANG UP ON GA RECIPIENTS

***In order to clear a path for the luxurious lifestyles of tourists, hotel owners are trying to force San Francisco to conduct "urban cleansing" and drive away its poorest citizens.***

**Editorial by Lisa Gray-Garcia and Terry Messman**



**Homeless single adults are the targets of Prop. E in San Francisco.** Lydia Gans photo

It was a wet morning, the sky was thrashing and sweating bullets of rain. I thought: Maybe I should take a walk, get some air. I nervously descended my cluttered stairwell.

The Tenderloin was quiet, moist, almost peaceful. I proceeded down Ellis Street. I crossed Leavenworth. It was only one more block, and then I was there: the corner of Ellis and Taylor streets.

Thick arms of shimmering glass, steel and gold reached up into a down pillow of gray clouds. The arms were rooted in a concrete body lined with red carpet, glistening crystal and bright white letters that read, "The San Francisco Hilton."

I stood before the immense structure and wondered, "What could they possibly gain by donating several thousand dollars to a ballot initiative that would eradicate low-income tenants from my neighborhood?"

Ever since Proposition E was put forth by wealthy business owner Earl Rynerson, with substantial financial backing from the Building Owners and Managers Association, the Hilton and Marriot hotels, and other Union Square hotels and businesses, I have been having a series of terrifying nightmares. They take me back to a year ago when I was on General Assistance and at the mercy of unethical or uninterested landlords who would no sooner accept a voucher for rent than they would fly to the moon.

You see, Prop. E proposes to take away the already miniscule General Assistance check and replace it with a voucher to be given to a landlord instead of cash. But such a voucher would not be acceptable to my landlord, and would give him grounds to evict me immediately.

Prop. E is an initiative on the March 7 ballot in San Francisco that would cut GA benefits by 85 percent, leaving poor and homeless people only $55 a month to survive on, and a virtually worthless housing voucher that falls far short of the rental rates in even the most rundown Tenderloin hotel. Their rooms rent, on average, for $460 per month — far more than the $300 voucher allocated under Prop. E.

This measure purports to force people to use their benefits for housing, yet does absolutely nothing to increase the stock of low-income housing in a city with a disastrous shortage. The net result is to punish poor people for being homeless by cutting their benefits all the way to the bone.

In a disturbing revelation of their lack of social responsibility, the wealthy businesses that have benefited most from a surging economy are sponsoring this cruel initiative that will force poor people into ever greater destitution. Prop. E is funded in large part by donations from luxury hotels catering to affluent tourists — including the Hilton, Marriot, Handlery, Chancellor and Grand Hyatt hotels.

In order to clear a path for the luxurious lifestyles of out-of-town tourists, these hotel owners are trying to force San Francisco to conduct "urban cleansing" and drive away its own poor citizens. Forget about the meek inheriting the earth: Let the sleek inherit the earth.

Prop E is a double-edged scythe that would cut a devastating swath through the ranks of both homeless and housed GA recipients. First, it would cut the lifeline benefits of about 3000 homeless GA recipients, who would be reduced to a paltry $55 per month to live on.

Secondly, backers of this measure conveniently ignore the fact that two-thirds of GA recipients are already housed. Prop. E would jeopardize more than 6000 GA recipients who have managed to find housing. That's because many landlords will not bother with time-consuming registrations and bureaucratic reimbursement schemes for a meager $300 voucher.

Before you cast your vote on March 7, take one moment and picture yourself as homeless on the hard streets of San Francisco, facing the highest rental market in the nation's history. Imagine your only cash assistance suddenly dropping in a sickening plummet down to $55 per month and ponder your hopeless struggle to survive on that pittance. Reflect on the inhumanity of these starvation rations, then ask yourself why it is necessary to punish the poorest among us at the very moment when the economy is booming for everyone else.

*Lisa Gray-Garcia is the co-editor of POOR magazine and www.poornewsnetwork.com. Terry Messman is the editor of Street Spirit, published by the American Friends Service Committee.*

# Rynerson's Folly

**Housing is nearly impossible to find for the working class, let alone those receiving welfare. Residential hotel rooms, even rat-infested hell holes, are especially scarce.**

**Editorial by Helen Granath**

John, gaunt, 40-ish, and on the dole, stood on Hyde Street in the Tenderloin, his German Shepherd at his side. I asked John what Proposition E would mean to him. "I would get less than two dollars a day to live on," he told me. "I spend more than that to feed my dog."

Prop. E would drastically change General Assistance, the city welfare program John relies on. Currently, GA pays those in need $285 to $355 in cash per month. Many are in job-training programs; others do grunt labor — sweeping streets, washing buses — for the city. The San Francisco ballot measure would transform the money into a $300 housing voucher; the recipient would get $44 a month in cash for food, clothes, toiletries, transportation, and other necessities.

It's a scheme dreamed up by Earl B. Rynerson, a wealthy computer consultant. Rynerson believes, "most GA recipients are addicts or alcoholics and use their cash as a drug and alcohol allowance." Prop. E is his solution to his imagined problem.

Roughly two-thirds of the people who get GA have homes — many residing in SRO hotels. One-third are homeless. Fifty-three percent are disabled, and a quarter are senior citizens. Most rely on the program for less than six months. And despite Rynerson's beliefs, only a small percentage are substance abusers.

Building industry studies show San Francisco tops the list for least affordable housing in California. To obtain a home or apartment is an ultra-competitive matter. The Bay Area population has surged 10 percent in the last ten years, and San Francisco ranks among the ten fastest growing cities — yet little housing, affordable or otherwise, has been built to meet the demand. Rents in San Francisco's cheapest neighborhoods have doubled in just a few short years. Vacancy rates hover below one percent.

City officials can't decide how many homeless folks dwell in the streets. When requesting federal funds they say around 15,000; when talking to the press they say 5,000. The shelters are way past full.

By any index, housing is nearly impossible for the working class, let alone those receiving welfare, to find. Residential hotel rooms — even rat-infested hell holes — are especially scarce.

There are no more $300 a month hotels or apartments. The cheapest SRO dive now goes for $450. Will hotel owners take a pay cut in the form of a Prop. E housing voucher? No way. The measure will dump more people on the streets.

Rynerson's dream is an ill-conceived proposal that will cost the city at least $6 million additional dollars due to extra bureaucratic costs. It's based on false claim that all poor people receiving county assistance are junkies, crackheads, or drunks. Painting the whole group with the same brush is morally wrong.

Most importantly, Prop E will aggravate an already horrible housing crisis. It will lead to more evictions, hurting the people who need help the most.

Vote no on Prop E. Please.

*Helen Granath is part of Raising Our Voices, a Media Alliance program that trains homeless people in investigative reporting.*


## Street Spirit

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# 'Quality of Life' Laws Create an Inequality of Life

**"How many housing units could be built with $250,000? I say we shave the gold off City Hall and open up real housing!"** — protester Ivy McClelland

**by Terry Messman**



**The shopping carts of the poor create a striking contrast to the gold-edged dome of S.F. City Hall in the rear.** Lydia Gans photo

In San Francisco, a city where gentrification equals dislocation for the poor, the treatment of homeless people has just taken a rightward turn for the worse. Mayor Willie Brown's latest plan to add $250,000 to the City Attorney's budget to prosecute so-called "quality of life" crimes by homeless people is a transparent scheme to enforce what Chance Martin of the Coalition on Homelessness calls the "inequality of life."

The inequality of life. The phrase resonates with special intensity these days in San Francisco, as a souped-up enforcement of "quality of life" crimes makes life more unequal than ever for those thousands whose plight worsens every time Mayor Brown decides to use police repression as a knee-jerk response to the growing homelessness caused by escalating rental levels and eviction rates.

The inequality of life. In a city trying to make its streets safer for the legalized profiteering of landlords, corporations, luxury hotel owners, and real-estate speculators, homeless people who inconveniently intrude on the sidewalks consecrated exclusively to the sacrosanct pursuit of profit must be pushed out of the way with the brute force of the police.

The inequality of life. In T.S. Eliot's poem, "The Rock," the Stranger arrives unannounced in a city, and asks a disquieting question of the inhabitants.

*"When the Stranger says: 'What is the meaning of this city? Do you huddle close together because you love each other?'*

*"What will you answer? 'We all dwell together to make money from each other' or 'this is a community'?"*

The Stranger's stark question is a litmus test for the soul of every city. The powers that be in San Francisco have chosen to answer this question in the worst possible way, so now it hangs over our heads as a prophetic indictment of how the unbridled greed of business interests has driven political leaders to sacrifice their humanity at the altar of commerce.

San Francisco is carrying out a massive experiment in urban removal of the poor via relentless rent hikes, a rash of owner move-in evictions, and the demolition of public housing. This process of economic elimination is then joined to the failure of the successive mayoral administrations of Willie Brown, Frank Jordan and Art Agnos to build adequate housing for an estimated 15,000 homeless people.

However, for the business interests this slow but steady war against the unwanted poor is not going nearly fast enough. Driven by the clamor of merchants to have street people erased from commercial districts, Mayor Brown has accelerated the process of urban cleansing by adding a quarter-million dollars to the City Attorney's budget to prosecute "quality of life" infractions.

San Francisco police dump these citations on homeless people by the truckload. Last year, the SFPD gave out a record 23,871 citations for quality of life infractions, according to statistics compiled by the Coalition on Homelessness. This avalanche of paper is intended to bury the poor in legal misfortunes, fines, warrants for failure to appear, and jail time.

The criminalization of thousands upon thousands of people sends a message calculated in its cruelty: If you are homeless, there is no affordable housing, no legal place to sleep at night, nowhere to be free from the fear of police harassment.

In 1999, in a law-and-order outburst against the unsheltered poor, San Francisco police issued 1,661 tickets for illegal camping and sleeping in public, and 2,698 tickets for trespassing, which includes sleeping in doorways, even though there are only 1,500 shelter beds for an estimated 15,000 homeless residents.

In response, the Coalition on Homelessness held a City Hall protest on February 10 in resistance to Mayor Brown's City Attorney Prosecution Program. Officials responded to this peaceful, legal demonstration with heavy-handed police surveillance by about 20 uniformed SFPD officers.

The police seemed bent on provoking a needless confrontation by warning Coalition members at the outset that if their sound system gave out more than 10 watts they would be arrested under the noise-abatement ordinance. The officer in charge told protest organizer Mara Raider that he would "guarantee arrests if you fire up the generator."

The speakers were definitely fired up. Coalition speaker Ronnie Eagles exhorted the protesters: "Let's raise our voices! We need solutions! No more prosecutions!"

Eagles decried Mayor Brown's proposal to "pay two staff attorneys a quarter-million dollars to prosecute poor people when the Mayor's Health Department Director, Mitch Katz, wants to cut health care to poor people."

Paul Boden, director of the Coalition on Homelessness, said, "We gotta fight back against these citations and prosecutions that Channel 2 news calls a new homeless program. It's not a new pro-

*See* **Quality of Life Laws** *page 22*

# Just Another Day in Our Pretty City

**by Elizabeth Perez**

This morning I was walking along Market Street in San Francisco on my way to work, when I noticed a police officer assisted by a Department of Public Works (DPW) worker dismantling a shopping cart full of someone's personal belongings. I looked around for the owner and saw no one. I looked in the police vehicle and no one was in there either. The officer and the DPW worker were throwing the belongings onto a truck, and it broke my heart.

I kept walking, knowing that if I asked the officer what he was doing he probably would have told me to mind my own business. I continued walking, but then I turned around and noticed a coworker of mine looking at what these city workers were doing. We couldn't comprehend why they were doing this.

Then the owner of the belongings came running up the street and approached the truck. She told the police officer that the things in the cart were hers. The officer told her that she had abandoned this cart and that they were hauling it away.

I told the officer that the woman who owned it was back now so she should be able to keep her things, to please give them back to her. I told him that was all she owned. He said that he had seen her earlier with another cart. I said to him that if he had seen her that meant she did not abandon the cart, because she couldn't possibly push two at the same time!

**You should have seen her face as she stood there holding only what she could in her arms. The police officer didn't even tell her where she could get her things back. He just told the DPW worker to drive off.**

My coworker and I asked the police officer why he was doing this and he said: **"I am just doing my job, I am following orders from the Mayor."**

I told the DPW worker to give the lady her things back. He said he would if the officer instructed him to do so. The officer said, "No," and told the worker to drive away.

The lady asked for specific possessions and began to name what was in the truck; she knew exactly what was in there. It was not as if the things that used to be in the cart were useless; her belongings of course meant *something* to her if she could name what they were! She was only able to take a few things; you should have seen her face as she stood there holding only what she could in her arms. The officer didn't even tell her where she could get her things back. He just told the DPW worker to drive off!

I felt helpless because I couldn't do anything to help this woman. I got to work so overwhelmed I was in tears. My coworkers at the Homeless Prenatal Program asked me what happened, and when they heard they said, "let's go to City Hall" and see what can be done.

Seven of us walked over to the mayor's office together, and said we wanted to complain about the injustice that had just taken place. No one helped us, although one person did say that the cops are not supposed to say that it's the mayor's orders to take people's stuff. *Not* that the cop shouldn't have taken her stuff, just that he shouldn't say it was the mayor's orders!

We were then referred to the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services, where we told an assistant to Mayor Willie Brown what had happened and she told us that she would look into it.

We all decided to walk over to Supervisor Tom Ammiano's office; we figured if *anyone* could help guide us in the right direction it would be someone in *his* office. His aide took time out to sit with all of us and was just as passionate about this situation as we all were. He was appalled that the officer was "following the mayor's orders." He told us to write about what happened and hold the mayor responsible for his actions, since it seems like there's nothing else we can do.

We then all took a walk over to Steve Kava's office, whose assistant was very unhelpful. We asked for an appointment to see him but she would not give us one. When we asked for his business card at least, she said that he had run out. What a liar! She asked for our phone number and said someone would get back to us.

We left the office with the feeling that no one from that office would be calling us. When will we get some help instead of lies out of City Hall? Obviously someone needs to take responsibility for this. I wonder who will?

# SAN DIEGO OFFICIALS DEFEND POLICE SHOOTING OF HOMELESS MAN, COMMUNITY EXPRESSES DEEP OUTRAGE

by Forrest Curo, *Street Light*




**"STOLEN LIVES — Victims of Police Brutality." A billboard lists victims of police violence in California.** Lydia Gans photo

**"As far as I'm concerned, he was a victim, a victim of the police's brutality.... As far as I'm concerned, this should be the last time. And you, first of all, should be wanting it to be the last time and not again! The whole mental health community ought to rise up, and the homeless ought to rise up with them, and say: 'Stop it! Stop it today. Make this the last one!' "** — Rev. Glen Allison, addressing Assistant Police Chief John Welter

In broad daylight, a mentally disabled homeless man was panicked and killed by San Diego police officers before horrified (and reliable) witnesses on Tuesday, February 8. *Street Light* vendor Richard McKean, working a few blocks from the scene, called us a few minutes later, in time to catch the on-the-spot reporting by a local television station. There were the witnesses, several of them, all of them shocked and outraged.

William Miller had struck a bicyclist with a three-foot branch. The branch was to grow like Pinocchio's nose over the next several days, becoming "sharpened at both ends," and "almost four feet long." But according to a passing law professor, it was actually a stripped palm frond.

The bicyclist, unharmed but disturbed, called the police, who arrived in force and shot Miller about ten minutes later. The immediate cause of the shooting may have been the police dog. Miller had lowered his stick and was talking to officers, but when the dog arrived he picked up his stick and ran towards them.

Mario Reese, quoted in the first *Union Tribune* account of the shooting, said that Miller ran because an officer with pepper spray approached from behind and drove him toward the other officers. As a police spokesman put it in the same article, "For whatever reason, he chose to come at the officers with the stick."

The officers had drawn their guns; three of them fired at Miller. The dog was wounded and Miller was killed.

While no one was particularly close to Miller, he usually "seemed very gentle and not troublesome," according to Martin Eder, who teaches sociology at a North County community college. Others familiar with Miller concurred. They put up a small sidewalk memorial at the spot.

The next day, Wednesday, a press conference was held there with San Diego City Councilmembers Byron Wear and George Stevens. Both were concerned about this case, in Wear's district, and with other recent questionable police shootings that have disturbed many members of the public, particularly African-American and Latino people because of their disproportionate risk of suffering such incidents.

Wear and Stevens had already called on Mayor Susan Golding for a full City Council discussion of the San Diego Police Department's deadly force policy. Police spokesmen told reporters that a discussion of the use of deadly force was scheduled for a community forum to be held Thursday evening in a mixed neighborhood some distance away.

On Thursday afternoon, another event was held at the site of Miller's shooting. Many came to express personal grief for the incident and many were there to call public attention to police excesses; the two sentiments were not incompatible.

One young woman, Carla Kentu, was particularly upset, saying: "I'm here every day, and every day I see the same man. Every day he sits at the very last tree, and he had a water bottle, and he'll wash himself. Every day I watch him go through the same routine. I've gotten used to him, so I can feel for him.

"What really upsets me is these people. A lot of these faces I see every day. They will come here, and they'll snub him. 'Oh, the dirty man!' you know. 'Scrub that, where he was. We don't want to eat there; we don't want to drink there. Isn't there anything you can do to get rid of these homeless?' I hear this all the time. I just want to know, why now? Is it just because they want publicity? You never hear from them until there's a death; then you hear from them.

"It really upsets me. He was here every day; a lot of these customers saw him every day; why couldn't they help him? I know he wasn't in his right mind, because I used to watch him every day. They're not talking about that. They're talking about, oh, you're hearing about racism; you're hearing about 'the police only protect the rich.' They're not here about that; they're here because of this; it's supposed to be about this.

"I think if you really want to change something, each individual has to change. Each individual has to find room in their hearts to be nice to someone at least once a day. You don't have to snub your nose because they don't get to bathe every day, or they don't get to brush their hair, or they don't get to have something that you have. That's not right.

"I really feel bad for him. I used to see him every day; I'm going to miss him. They're trying to say all this stuff. This homeless man got shot. Why don't they deal with that?"

A great many people were trying to deal with that, from their own varied perspectives, and on Thursday night, February 10, two days after the shooting of William Miller, there was an overwhelming turnout at the community meeting held by the San Diego police.

### COMMUNITY OUTRAGE BOILS OVER

Police had planned this meeting far in advance, in a laudable effort to improve police-community relations and recruit more minority officers. Circumstances utterly trampled their planning, and yet what took place may in fact do more to further their purposes than any number of more controlled events.

The assumption from the beginning was that the police would be doing the educating, and that the public at the meeting were to be the educatees. This expectation was rather rapidly shattered. A male officer attempted "to have a power point presentation" on "crime statistics and how we're doing as far as crime is concerned."

But a few slides into the show a young African-American man wanted to know, "Does this include the police shootings on any of the bar graphs?"

"We didn't have any police shootings in this division last year," the officer said.

A woman shouted: "What about the police beatings?"

The officer kept going, "This is just this division, sir. Southeastern San Diego, which includes everything south of 94 and east of Interstate 15."

The man persisted. The officer insisted, "That number is zero. We'll have questions at the end, if you'd like to bring that up."

A short-haired white man stood up near the stage and spoke of trouble getting the Police Department to respond to his complaints. "I'm the CEO of a San Diego corporation," he said. "I have been assaulted by the San Diego Police Department; my house was broken into by the police department. I asked that an

*See* **San Diego Police Shooting** *page 20*

## SEQUENCES

by Mary Rudge

**1.**

**The homeless are resting**
**under the golden leaves of trees**
**in the plaza in front of the**
**city hall. The leaves are golden**
**because it is fall and turning cold.**
**The homeless are old or sick**
**or disabled and poor men women**
**and children, worn out.**
**They need to sleep awhile**
**because they are very tired**
**from trembling and shivering without**
**fire or food.**
**There is a cupola of gold that cost**
**the city a lot of money on city hall.**
**The Mayor**
**comes out from under his golden cupola**
**to wake and scatter the people on the**
**cement gently sleeping,**
**with his screams.**

**2.**

**An expansive golden bridge, expensive,**
**comes in and out of the city but**
**has not led to a solution on either side.**

**3.**

**In golden stream of headlights,**
**houselights, we, earning money,**
**go here or there; that we roll up**
**car windows and look away or roll away,**
**does not mean we do not care —**
**we know from care of our cars**
**a ping in the motor means something**
**is falling apart and so does a pang**
**in the heart. We have heard**
**and seen tears dropping from men**
**women and children, falling like rain**
**ping ping ping ping ping ping**
**ping ping pang pang pang pain**
**pain pain pain pain.**

**4.**

**There is an invisibility of angels,**
**of God. We have not seen**
**love and mercy and justice**
**take these forms in our time.**
**Unless these are the forms**
**sitting, laying, fallen on the cement,**
**and our church, our religion**
**is spanning the golden bridge**
**in sight of the golden cupola**
**where kneeling in golden leaves**
**we put our hands on foreheads,**
**bring food to mouths and say,**
**like Mother Teresa, to each,**
**"I see God**
**in your face."**

**Where car lights and houselights**
**are search lights**
**for finding and bringing**
**home.**

**5.**

**there are consequences**
**when there are sequences.**

# WHO ORDERED THE RAIDS ON FOOD NOT BOMBS?

## Homeless journalists track down the culprits who planned the police crackdown on Food Not Bombs

**by Challa Tabeson, Alice Nuccio, Barbara Moir, Helen Granath, Max Nolan, Trent Hayward**

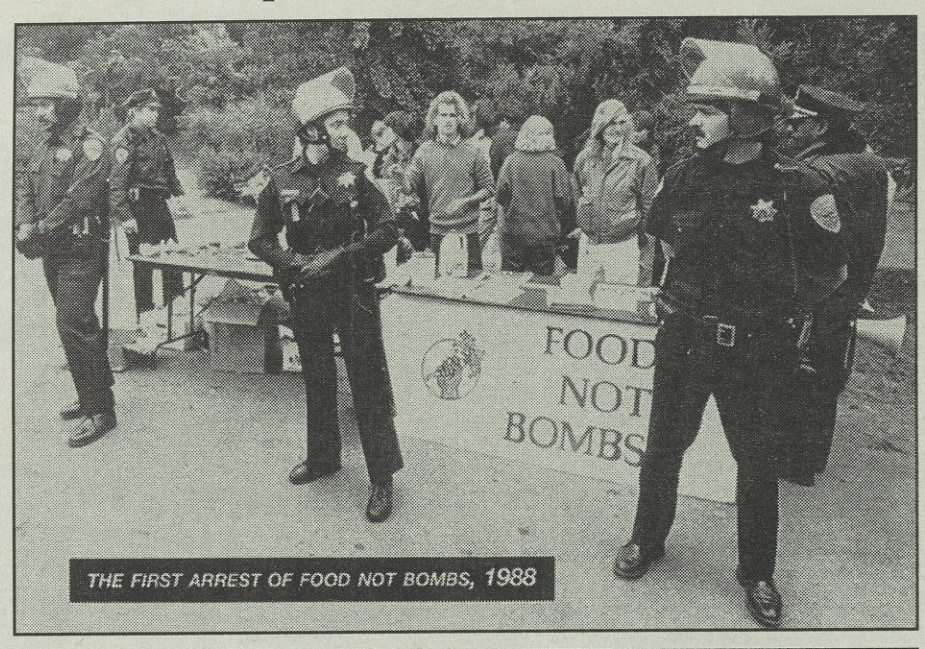
Over the past two decades, Food Not Bombs (FNB) has grown into a nonviolent direct action group that serves free food with hungry and homeless people around the world. The groups collect donated food and prepare meals in volunteer kitchens. The meals are then shared in public places, where hungry people congregate, to draw attention to the crises of homelessness and poverty.

During the past 12 years, while FNB chapters have sprouted from Boston to Los Angeles, the City of San Francisco has repeatedly attempted to destroy the local group. Most recently, in the midst of a high-stakes mayoral race, San Francisco cops again cracked down on Food Not Bombs, shutting down meal services, confiscating food and cooking equipment, and arresting 13 activists. It had been four years since the last enforcement of a court order barring outside meals. FNB wondered what prompted the renewed arrests.

While San Francisco officials claim that FNB has never secured the health permits necessary for public food service, FNB servers and organizers believe that the City's aim is to prevent them from fulfilling their mission: serving food while exposing the fact that governments spend billions on weapons but pennies on social services.

Reporters trained in investigative journalism by Raising Our Voices (ROV) conducted an investigation of the harassment of Food Not Bombs over the past three months. ROV reporters now have direct evidence that San Francisco cops are out to get FNB, not because the group serves free food, not because it doesn't *hold the correct (but impossible to obtain)* permits, but for a far more direct, more political offense: feeding people in one of the grandest and most visible places in San Francisco — United Nations Plaza.

It's not that the outfit hasn't tried to go legit: Since 1988, San Francisco FNB volunteers have spent hundreds of hours meeting with public officials in an effort to clear the legal hurdles set up by city hall. And the one time the group's field kitchen was certified by the city, police confiscated the tent and cooking equipment.



THE FIRST ARREST OF FOOD NOT BOMBS, 1988

**ROV reporters now have direct evidence that San Francisco cops are out to get FNB, not because the group serves free food, or doesn't hold the correct permits, but for a far more political offense: feeding people in one of the most visible places in San Francisco — United Nations Plaza.**

### 1000 ARRESTS OF FOOD NOT BOMBS

In the past 12 years, San Francisco police have made more than 1000 arrests of FNB volunteers, including 300 in 1988 and 1989, 600 in 1993 and 1994, and most recently, about 15 in the autumn of 1999. During October and November of 1999, San Francisco's finest showed up at UN Plaza and dragged FNB members to jail. The hot soup and bread the volunteers sought to hand out was confiscated as evidence of their crimes.

These arrests were allegedly precipitated by complaints from downtown merchants, pressuring the Tenderloin Police Task Force to enforce the injunction against FNB's public meals; this generated some negative publicity for the mayor's office. In response, Food Not Bombs mobilized a broad coalition of support from community groups and individuals who spoke out in favor of FNB and showed up at nightly community meals. Negotiations were restarted between the organization and city officials, who claimed they wanted a resolution to this embarrassing conflict.

Food Not Bombs asked that the Board of Supervisors dissolve the 1989 injunction in a show of good faith while legal and health concerns were addressed. Meetings with officials from the Department of Public Health (DPH) and supervisors in November led to a hearing before the Finance and Labor Committee in December. But at this point, FNB has yet to gain legal permission to pursue its mission.

The Health Department is now looking into a waiver of the requirements for certified kitchens, as FNBers are adamant about preparing food in their homes. They say it is fundamental to how they organize and that the inspections and certifications are geared towards for-profit businesses and standard soup kitchens which often receive public funding.

Local officials seemed to appreciate FNB's commitment to high health standards and ongoing work, providing essential services to people whose needs are not met by established institutions. At the November, 1999, meeting, DPH officials Jack Breslin and Rajiv Bahtia told Food Not Bombs negotiators that they would seek a waiver of the kitchen regulations from state health officials.

Legal permission would also involve changing San Francisco Parks and Recreation code Section 703, which currently outlaws free food distribution. FNB servers see the ongoing negotiations as a battle against government regulation and the restriction of public space.

While awaiting decisions by the DPH and the Board of Supervisors, FNB volunteers are not holding their breath. This is the third time they have entered into negotiations with the City since 1989.

### TRACKING THE PAPER TRAIL

Raising Our Voices asked San Francisco public officials some simple questions about the autumn crackdown on FNB. But getting answers didn't prove so simple. We sought access to the internal city hall paper trail. Who initiated the recent arrests? Why did the arrests start only a few weeks before Mayor Willie Brown's bid for re-election, and why did the clampdown suddenly stop?

ROV hit ranking city officials with a barrage of public records requests, asking for any memos or correspondence related to FNB. We filed these with Mayor Willie Brown, Chief of Police Fred Lau, District Attorney Terence Hallinan, and SFPD spokesperson Sherman Ackerson.

Despite follow-up calls and letters, only the prosecutor responded. "I am not aware of any correspondence... regarding Food Not Bombs except for a letter that was supportive of a [FNB] permit," wrote assistant DA Richard Iglehart to ROV.

One ROV reporter ventured into the cop shop to talk to law enforcers face to face. "I understand, but city hall and residents don't want [FNB serving hungry poor folks] in front of their places," Captain Ackerson told us. Ackerson, the public face of the SFPD, said he "questions whether Food Not Bombs is concerned about people or politics."

The officer said the police were only enforcing the law and didn't consider the

*See* **S.F. Food Not Bombs** *page 19*

## MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR 169 HOMELESS PEOPLE


Lydia Gans photo

**Religious Witness placed 169 tombstones as a memorial to those who died homeless.**

Religious Witness with Homeless People held a three-day Memorial Service from February 27-29 in Civic Center Plaza to honor 169 homeless people who died in San Francisco in 1999, and the 1,599 people who died on the streets in the last 12 years.

Sister Bernie Galvin, director of Religious Witness, said, "We gather as a community to bear witness to the tragedy of 169 people who died homeless in our very midst. As we seek to forge a new direction in our homeless policies, we cannot ignore the vast City budget surplus of over $90 million, even as a record number die homeless on our streets. Our City's budget must reflect the right of *all* people to basic human necessities, including housing."

## A Day of Love and Sorrow

BEING AWARE OF THE HUNDREDS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO DIED HOMELESS IN OUR COMMUNITY OVER THE YEARS AND DECLARING FEBRUARY 27, 2000, "A DAY OF LOVE AND SORROW, REMEMBERING THE 169 MEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN WHO DIED HOMELESS IN SAN FRANCISCO IN 1999."

WHEREAS, At least 100 homeless people have died in San Francisco each year since 1988; and,

WHEREAS, A record 169 homeless individuals died on San Francisco streets in 1999; and,

WHEREAS, Over the past 12 years since such records have been kept, at least 1,599 homeless people have died homeless in our City; and,

WHEREAS, The average life expectancy in the U.S. is 76.1 years, and the average age of homeless individuals who died in San Francisco is 43.6 years; and,

WHEREAS, Two of the homeless people who died in San Francisco in 1999 were a 39-day-old boy and a 4-month-old girl; and,

WHEREAS, Religious Witness with Homeless People is organizing a broad-based Community Memorial Service to be held on Sunday, February 27, 2000, to commemorate the tragedy of 169 homeless deaths in our community in 1999; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco remembers those hundreds of individuals who have died homeless in San Francisco; and, be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors declares February 27, 2000, "A Day of Love and Sorrow, Remembering the 169 Men, Women, and Children Who Died Homeless in San Francisco in 1999."

Sponsoring Supervisors: Leno (leading sponsor) Bierman, Newsom, Teng, Yee, Brown, Yaki, Ammiano, Katz, Becerril. (All but Kaufman.)

# 'Long live the world we all dreamed about...'

**Long John was a homeless vehicle dweller who embodied the spirit of the Diggers. He consistently sowed messages of peace. Long John dead? I can't get this to be real. Long live the world we all dreamed about and the world John was always, always creating.**

**by Linda Lemaster**

*"I bargained for Salvation and they gave me a lethal dose..."* — Dylan

Now I'm told Long John is dead! Found under the spanking new Soquel Avenue Bridge, near downtown Santa Cruz. Reported as the first local homeless death of this new century. I've known a lot of homeless folk, and I've been one way too often, but I'd never really thought of Long John as a homeless guy until the news his body was found hit the streets.

Long John was a vehicle dweller who embodied the spirit of the Diggers all the time. He wasn't a big talker, but his actions were uncanny and he consistently sowed messages of peace.

I haven't yet been able to accept my grief since last month they told me young Eddie Hicks was dead and his cohorts had abandoned him when he passed on, leaving him alone along the railroad right-of-way. Eddie, homeless since he was a teenager, used to play with and help look after my nearly grown son when the latter first started school. I'll always be grateful for his influence. Many memories together under the sky. My heart goes to his parents.

Long John also was a guiding star for my amazing youngsters. He shared his hippie archives and incredible memories of the '60s with young and old, including my two boys. He was one of the few men I've ever seen who could adore this planet like a Mother, out loud. He was one hell of a cowboy, too — he had the guts to hang a six-foot-tall peace sign on the central common outhouse wall up on the mountain ridge one hot summer when everyone else had succumbed to high-noon, gun-toting, diarrhea-flu, broken-glass, grumpy, moody bullshit.

His bus was the most magical trip in the whole hippie world, from Georgetown to Haight-Ashbury. I was blessed to visit his rolling home, touching the crystals and icons of that halcyon era. Most people probably knew him from the Skyview flea market. He was self-contained and self-supporting, trading everything from comic books and psychedelic posters to giant quartz crystals to Mexican bananas.

A few years back, his big bus turned into a pickup truck with a cab-over camper. It sported a giant coolie hat that may have once been a bamboo chair, but was big enough to give a roof to the automobile that was his home, his cathedral and his vocation.

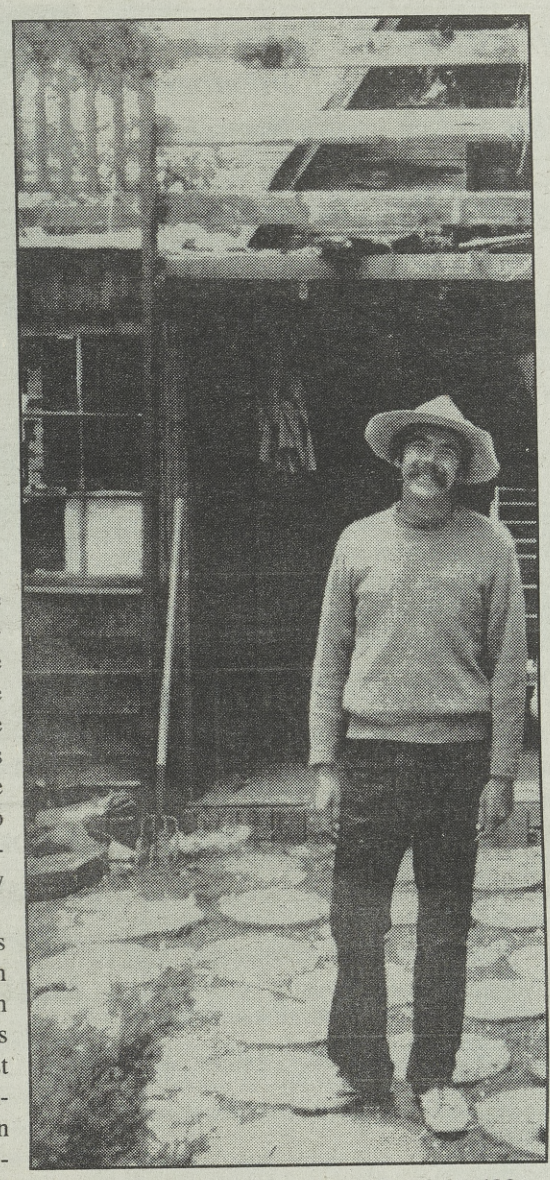
Then the truck disappeared, too. Friends report that Long John was reduced to the sidewalks after the Department of Motor Vehicles confiscated his license, then the vehicle because of unpaid fines. A fate befalling more and more people lately, according to civil rights attorney Kate Wells, who cites the spiraling costs and consequences to people who can't afford the courtroom extortion or the bureaucracy of the highways.

One of my most vivid memories is of that night from hell when Long John and my own best man had to put out a psychotic arsonist's Indian Summer forest fire with just four arms, two buckets and a bathtub tap. They were heroes in an impossible situation, both "thinking" with their hearts and "hearing" with their instincts.

So I can't accept this death concept. How could Long John be dead? This is someone I knew as very much alive and courageous as it ever gets, and how could he really be dead, really ever not Be? He was one of those rare full-time hippies who never sold out.

I was walking home yesterday and it was raining. I had my raincoat, but I was too soggy and exhausted from pain to put it on. I had already spilled coffee on the pages of my new millennium appointment book that morning. Everything going from bad to worse.

One block more from the bus to my door; it was a block where Long John visited and used to park. In my bitter mind, remembering the last time I'd trekked there, I thought, "Imagine never again seeing a flower chain of colored chalk Peace Signs along this sidewalk." And I became self-pity. So certain I was in my despair I assumed all those Peace Signs Long John drew must all have been washed away in the gloomy rain. I refused to look on the sidewalk and strode into the street, avoiding my feelings of loss.



Long John embodied the spirit of the '60s.

And then Long John's Spirit hit me like a pop-up video in the shape of a perfect Peace Symbol, the exact same size as the ones I'd seen and believed mournfully were missing from the sidewalks. Drawn with a stick, into the patch of new street concrete. Despite itself, the City of Santa Cruz had provided a more enduring palette and canvas for John's message.

We need to stop berating, neglecting and attacking our men and youth and boys. It's getting them killed. Eddie Hicks, only 25 at his death, had been homeless since he was a teenager. He never even had a chance at the things most Americans take for granted as "normal life." Eddie's father once told me his son went to jail for 14 days when he turned eighteen, hoping to get a clean slate from accumulating camping tickets. Some celebration of manhood.

Shouldn't somebody be sticking up for our guys? From my experience, way too many who are homeless or who are outdoor people are going down. So are the ones who live in their cars and vans, or who in any way walk with a different drummer. Or who just don't buckle down with the aesthetics of Empire.

What happens to our pacifists and sages? We don't get to meet conscious *pacifists very often. Is this persecution* and rejection the reason? Long John dead? I can't get this to be real. Long live the world we all dreamed about and the world John was always, always creating.

I wish we could bring our spiritual leaders and healers into the woods and along the tracks and under the bridges; and bring our best witnesses into the jails, nuthouses and newer, case-managed institutions. And create sanctuaries in every neighborhood. We're behaving like crowded lab rats, and we owe better to our brothers and our own children.

*Contact Linda Lemaster, Housing Now! PO Box 1735, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.*
*E-mail: lindashearth@hotmail.com*

## IDEA

**by Claire J. Baker**

**There's an unknown soldier**
**to symbolize all the fallen in all**
**the totally stupid wars.**
**And that's of course**
**every war.**
**Why not an unknown homeless person**
**laid to rest in a grand grave —**
**(shelter at last)**
**where people would walk by**
**and pay belated respect...**

## MEMORIES COME...

**by Claire J. Baker**

**In waves of windy birds**
**sweeping away clouds.**

**Though you know not of this poem**
**I feel you stirring as I write.**
**I dedicate to you its air and fire.**

**In the turmoil of your tarnished epic,**
**your slow fall from the mountain peak,**
**as your Merry-Go-Round grinds**
**unmusically, and it was not merry**

**know that I am here**
**awaiting your return**
**in waves of windy birds.**

## Poor Leonard's Almanack

**Edited by Leonard Roy Frank**
*Street Spirit* March 2000

1. Practical politics consists in ignoring facts.
HENRY ADAMS (American historian, 1838-1918), *The Education Of Henry Adams*, 1907

2. You grow up the day you have the first real laugh — at yourself.
ETHEL BARRYMORE (American actress, 1879-1959), in Laurence J. Peter, editor, *Peter's Quotations: Ideas For Our Time*, 1977

3. Society is made up of two great classes: those who have more dinners than appetite, and those who have more appetite than dinners.
CHAMFORT (French writer, 1741-1794), *Maxims And Thoughts*, 1796

4. The moral sense perhaps affords the best and highest distinction between man and the lower animals.
CHARLES DARWIN (English naturalist, 1809-1882), *The Descent Of Man And Selection In Relation To Sex*, 2nd ed., 1874

5. No condition so low but may have hopes, none so high but may have fears.
THOMAS FULLER (English proverb collector, 1654-1734), *Gnomologia*, 1732

6. Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your belief will help create the fact.
WILLIAM JAMES (American philosopher, 1842-1910), "Is Life Worth Living?" *The Will To Believe*, 1897

7. The secret of rulership is to combine a belief in one's infallibility with the power to learn from past mistakes.
GEORGE ORWELL (English writer, 1903-1950), *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, 1949

8. He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression.
THOMAS PAINE (American political philosopher, 1737-1809), "Dissertation on First Principles of Government," 1795

9. There are two kinds of people: those who don't know and those who don't know they don't know.
ROBERT B. REICH (American economist, 1946-), NBC-TV news program, 8 February 1995

10. A conservative doesn't want anything to happen for the first time; a liberal feels it should happen, but not now.
MORT SAHL (American humorist, 1927-), in Robert Byrne, ed., *1,911 Best Things Anybody Ever Said*, 1988

11. We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal.
ELIZABETH CADY STANTON (American women's rights leader, 1815-1902), Declaration of Sentiments, First Woman's Rights Convention, Seneca Falls (New York), 19 July 1848

12. The happiness of nations can be accomplished by pacific revolutions in their political system without the destructive intervention of the sword.
GEORGE WASHINGTON (American president, 1732-1799), reply to the Legislature of Pennsylvania, 5 September 1789

13. If you had the answer, what would the question be?

14. The know-nothings are less of a problem than the feel-nothings.

15. We are a journey that has forgotten its destination.

**********

*Leonard Roy Frank is the editor of Random House Webster's Quotationary, a collection of more than 20,000 quotations chosen by amazon.com as one of the 10 best reference works for 1999. The title of this column derives from Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard's Almanack.*

# Youth in the Urban Pressure Cooker

***Given the intense competition for scarce housing, it is the young, the weak, and the most damaged members of society who are most susceptible to becoming homeless.***

## TALON: A dialogue with a young homeless woman

**Interview by Ace Backwords**

When I first hit the streets back in 1976, the homeless population was mostly made up of grizzled, old, skid-row types. Today, however, we see an ever-growing number of homeless young people, many just barely in their teens. Most disturbing of all is the growing number of homeless young women.

One such woman is Talon.

While most city-dwellers have become hardened to the endless procession of panhandlers on our city streets, waif-like Talon has a sympathetic quality that can stop even the most jaded urbanites in their tracks. It's difficult to pass this young woman — with her wounded, lost-little-girl demeanor — without wondering what society has come to that such people find themselves fending for themselves on these cold, hard streets.

I don't claim to understand why Talon has ended up at her present station in life. I'm not even sure why I, myself, have ended up where I've ended up, for that matter. Strange and mysterious are the ways of our personal karma and destiny.

But you sense, after spending some time with Talon, that she's preoccupied by a spiritual battle that is waging in her soul. And that she seems dogged by personal problems and personal eccentricities — as well as a wild, untamed spirit — that make it difficult for her to adjust to the bland normality of conventional society. And yet, at the same time, she's a young woman of exceptional intelligence and originality, with much to offer society. Which makes it all the more tragic that she seems to have ended up, at least for the moment, shipwrecked on the fringes.

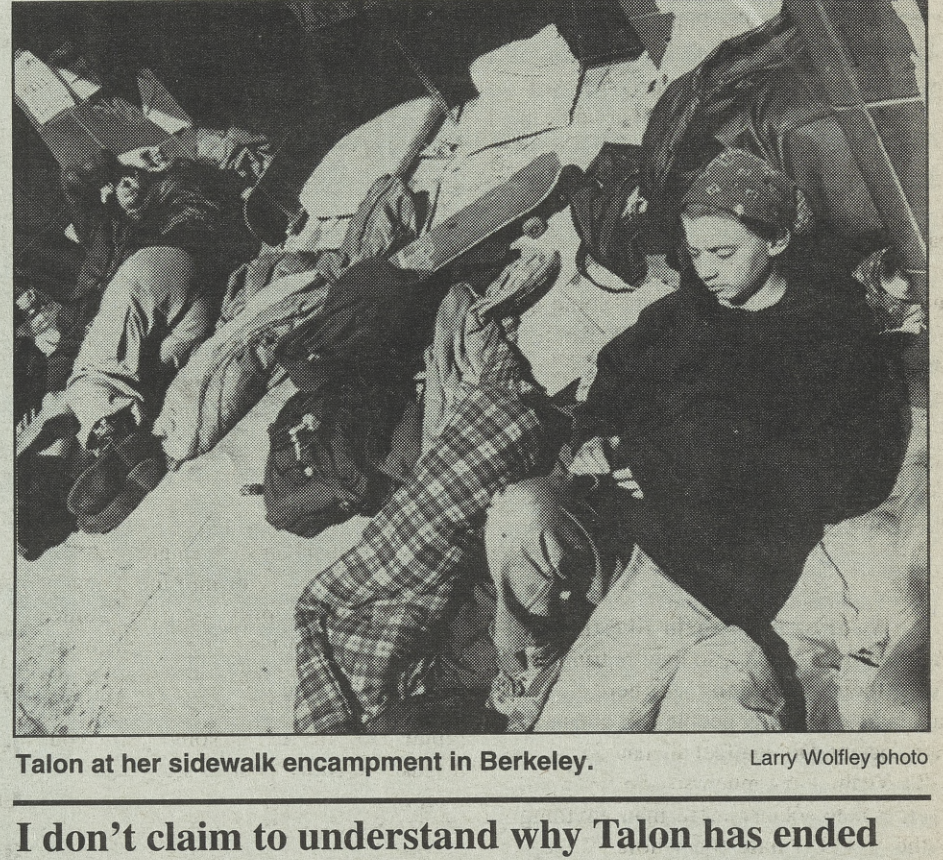
Compounding her personal problems, as she tries to kick-start her young life into gear, is the fact that she's faced with the daunting reality of our chronic Bay Area housing shortage. Given the intense competition for scarce housing, it is the young, the weak, and the most damaged members of society who are most susceptible to becoming homeless. With our population now exploding at a rate that has made it almost impossible to keep pace with new housing, we've created sort of a game of Musical Chairs where there's now five people for every four homes, with the slowest members of society left standing — left homeless.

One of the great tragedies of the modern homeless scene is that it's precisely these slow ones, the ones least capable of dealing with life's difficulties, who now find themselves forced to deal with the extreme difficulties of the homeless life.

Many homeless young people are already reeling from broken homes and psychological dysfunctions. Then, on top of that, they're dumped out into a crucible: the pressure-cooker of the homeless environment, where drugs, violence, street crazies, and the wear-and-tear of living outside in the cold and rain, are waiting to finish them off.

One of the crucial tasks that faces society today is finding ways to help these alienated young people fit back into society. For if we don't find ways to help them now — when they're still young and strong and capable of turning their lives around if given half a chance — then we'll only end up paying a greater price later on when many of them end up Beyond The Point Of No Return and become permanently incapable of being productive members of society.

As you read this interview with this bright and thoughtful young woman, you might want to ponder precisely why so many of today's young people are having such a difficult time finding a slot in society in the first place.



Talon at her sidewalk encampment in Berkeley. Larry Wolfley photo

**I don't claim to understand why Talon has ended up at her present station in life. I'm not even sure why I have ended up where I've ended up, for that matter. Strange and mysterious are the ways of our personal karma and destiny.**

*It's 3 a.m. on the deserted sidewalk on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley…*

**Ace Backwords:** How long have you been homeless on the streets?

**Talon:** Probably a year-and-a-half.

**A:** What advice would you give to a kid hitting the streets for the first time?

**T:** Probably, just not to trust anyone. And basically, find your place. It isn't a matter of your standard as far as legality. You have to follow the laws. But as far as with the other street kids, especially the ones that are around you or your friends: Basically, there's an honor code system. If you can't live by the rules of the kids, then you're in trouble.

**A:** That can be kind of confusing. On the one hand, there is sort of "the code of the streets." On the other hand, it seems like everyone has their own set of rules.

**T:** True, but there's some rules you don't break. Absolutely — oh my gosh! — you're dead if you snitch. That's one advice I would give.

**A:** When you're on the streets, you're definitely on the other side of that line — of the police or the official world. I thought your other piece of advice was good, about how they shouldn't necessarily trust anybody.

**T:** Trust **no one!**

**A:** I've seen a lot of kids on the street learn that lesson the hard way, because they don't realize some of the characters that are out here.

**T:** No shit.

**A:** How about on the practical level of finding a place to sleep?

T: In Berkeley, at least, you need to find one that's secret and **DON'T TELL ANYBODY.** Because it'll get popped. It's pretty bad with that shit now. Berkeley's not much of a squatter place anymore. Basically you've got to be quiet. You've got to be really respectful of whoever owns whatever it is you're using. You've got to be kind of gentlemanly with stuff you normally wouldn't be as a kid. Or else you'll lose it.

**A:** A lot of street people have trouble with that. On the one hand, they overestimate their position: (arrogantly) "I CAN SLEEP HERE IF I WANT, FUCK YOU!" And then there are other people who feel like they don't belong anywhere and they're always running from one place to another. They can never find that middle ground. Have you had trouble with getting harassed for sleeping?

**T:** Oh yeah. All over the place. Never got a ticket for sleeping, but we always get kicked out. Or get everything you owned thrown out if the cops bust the place. If it's a place you've been stashing stuff, you're fucked.

**A:** Have you had trouble losing a lot of your possessions?

**T:** Oh yeah. I learned very quick to adapt, to always be willing to not own anything I've loved at one point. Before in my life, I would have never, ever lost, or thrown a fit, or wanted to die, if I'd lost a prized possession. It just rolls off my back now.

**A:** Would you say being homeless is pretty hard as a lifestyle?

**T:** Yeah. Especially recently.

**A:** So you generally sleep during the day and stay up during the night?

**T:** Especially when it's rainy. My sleeping bag and all my stuff got completely soaked last night. So if I had tried to fall asleep I probably would have froze to death.

**A:** Do you have any trouble dealing with some of the street crazies, some of the dysfunctional people out here?

**T:** Yeah. All the time. I got my own little crew of stalkers. Fortunately it's not nearly as bad as when I was first here. I had my own little entourage of stalkers.

**A:** I'm 6-feet-tall, 180 pounds, a man, and fairly menacing in my own way. But you're fairly small and you're a woman, so that must be even more of a problem.

**T:** Yeah, but its not the end of the world. I take care of myself.

**A:** Have you developed any strategy for dealing with this?

**T:** Scare **them** away.

**A:** You're pretty feisty and strong-willed, so someone would have a hard time pushing you around.

**T:** Yeah, unless they're physically pushing me around, in which case, it's not that difficult to do. But trying to bully me is a little more difficult.

**A:** Have you always been like that, or have the streets toughened you up?

**T:** I've always been that way, but more just on the outside. I've learned better words to say. Now I tell people — just about anybody if I don't know them and they say hello to me — I tell them to go away. And I've really been mean. Whereas I used to be just kind of nicely saying: "Would it be alright with you if you please just went away?" Now I'm a little more rude about it. And I don't give them enough time to talk to me before I tell them to get the fuck out of my life. Do you what I mean?

**A:** O-o-oh yeah. Before I was on the streets, I got in like one fight in 20 years. My first couple of months on the streets, I had to literally throw at least five people away from my space. When you don't have those four walls to protect you, you have to erect those walls with your will.

**T:** Some of the people out here are just awful. Evil motherfuckers. They're cruel and they're scary…

**A:** One thing I learned from the streets is how to **read** people. Now, if someone comes up to me, I've got them pegged in 10 seconds: "He's an asshole!" or "He's cool." If there's one advice I'd give people is, you have to learn to read people, and you have to read them very fast, because you can get in the middle of some real fucked-up scenes real quick.

**T:** I hear that.

**A:** Would you like to talk about how you ended up on the streets in the first place?

**T:** No. It's too complicated.

**A:** That's one of the most fascinating questions, but one of the hardest to address.

**T:** A lot of it had to do with the fact that my parents are just not okay. It just got worse with my parents. And then I ended up out here.

**A:** It's hard to make generalizations about street people, because everyone I've met is so unique and so individual. But if there's one overriding theme: I feel like the streets is a scene of orphans. Not so much literally, but so many of them seem to be coming from broken families, or families that they're not connected with. Would you say that's one common denominator?

**T:** Oh yeah. Hell yes.

**A:** To me there's two main aspects to the homeless problem: One, the Broken Homes/Behavior Problems factor. And two, the purely Real Estate factor; the population is growing too fast for us to be able to keep pace by building new homes. The two aspects come together because it's the weakest members of society who get caught in this real estate crunch.

**T:** We're discriminated against.

**A:** Would you like to talk about the so-called Gutter Punk scene?

**T:** One thing I've noticed: Some people

*See* **A Talk with Talon** *page nine*

# A Talk with Talon

*from page eight*

are out here and they're Punk Rock against society. And some people are out here to just be rebellious. And some people actually like kicking ass on the fact that you can be Punk Rock and just be who you are — against everything that everybody's done to you. Or make a point and try something really beautiful and positive.

But then there's so many fucking punkers who are just fuckers! Some of them act like they're so "Punk Rock." And I don't even wear "punk" and shit. I don't dress punk. I don't claim punk. I don't even act that punk. But fucking — AEHH!! — I just get so annoyed by the pseudo-punks that are just sort of wearing the clothing. And they've got clean patches. They go home everyday. It just pisses me off.

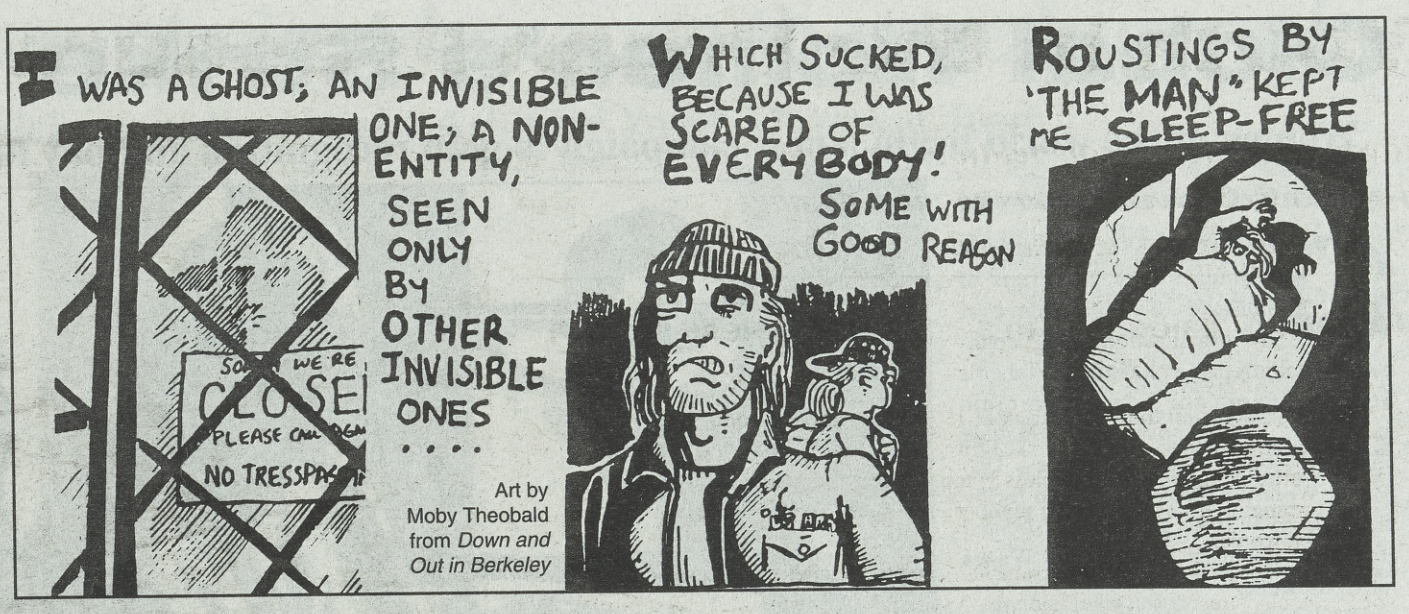
**A:** A lot of them seem like they're alienated from society, so they're trying to create their own family out here. It's a tragedy that so many people feel alienated from society. Do you feel alienated?

**T:** Yeah. Very much so. To the point where I hate society more than anything in the world. I hate the whole concept behind it. I hate the way it's portrayed. One thing that I've thought about a whole lot recently was: There's the voice of society that is about philosophy and issues. And then there's the voice of society and how they officially treat certain things that's just a cover-up. The philosophical voice is the one that fucks with me the most: "Homeless people are here because of da-da-da-DA." And it's a very nice voice except for when they actually meet the individual homeless, and then they're just plain evil.

It's the two-facedness. That's what bugs me. Or three-facedness. Or four-facedness. It's very complicated. I hate society's tendency to hide within itself. Its flaws. It cannot really even find their flaws, and the ones that are pointed out they hide instead of fixing.

**A:** People that are — quote, unquote — "compassionate for the plight of the homeless" in theory, but they could give a shit about a homeless person in particular. "I'm all for helping the homeless, but I sure wouldn't want a homeless shelter in *my* neighborhood."

**T:** Yeah. It's really annoying. All of that shit.




Art by Moby Theobald from *Down and Out in Berkeley*

**A:** Many homeless people are such unique individuals on such singular paths, that they can't quite slot into the pigeonholes that society puts them in. Some street people aren't good enough to fit into society, but others are too good. They're alienated because they're too original. Do you feel at some point you can make an adjustment to slot back into society?

**T:** Yeah, eventually I will.

**A:** Another issue is: How to get off the streets? For many people, the streets are like a bog, and the more you step into it, the deeper you sink. Are you concerned about that? That you might get too far into the streets where it may be difficult to pull yourself out?

**T:** Oh. Always. Always. I've got my set of fears, but I just ignore them. They're just stupid. Nervousness. Paranoia. Fears. Why worry about them? Why dwell on your shit?

**A:** Well, there's that line between useless paranoia and legitimate concerns.

**T:** Yeah, but just fearing it is ridiculous.

**A:** You know what helps me from not being afraid of anything? I feel that everything that happens is for my own good. And that everything that happens is exactly the way it was *meant* to happen. So I never fear what *could* happen. It's sort of a psychological judo for hurling all my fears over my shoulder....

Now, the latest *Street Spirit* did an article on the Albany Landfill.

**T:** I loved the Landfill. I lived down there a long time. I cannot explain how much I long to go back there. And how much I hope we can go back there. I miss it so much.

**Many homeless youth are already reeling from broken homes and psychological dysfunctions. On top of that, they are dumped out into the pressure cooker of the homeless environment, where drugs, violence, and the wear-and-tear of living outside in the cold and rain, are waiting to finish them off.**



Art by Chris Trian from *Ask A Mask* by Julia Vinograd.

**A:** What kind of set-up did you have? I heard people had different kinds of structures.

**T:** I just lived with everybody else there. I was a house-floater. We knew we were going to lose the place, so there was no point in me building one of the hutches.

**A:** I know a lot of people who never quite recovered from getting kicked out of there. So now you just crash in doorways?

**T:** Yeah. It's lame. I can't stand this *city. Comparatively. I hate it here.*

**A:** Do you feel there are other cities that are more homeless-friendly?

**T:** Aw, yeah! FUCK yeah! Berkeley is evil now! Berkeley used to be more homeless-friendly.

**A:** Yeah. Definitely. About a year or two ago, when they kicked everybody off of Telegraph, that was a turning point in Berkeley's attitude about the homeless. It exposed a lot of Berkeley's phoney-baloney "liberalism." Of course, the term "homeless-friendly" is relative; *No* town likes hordes of homeless descending on it. But I've been through some towns like Reno where they're really hard-ass. They make Berkeley look soft. If they catch some long-hair panhandling, they just grab him, throw him in jail for a week, cut his hair off, and drop him on the last off-ramp out of town.

**T:** That's true.

**A:** Would you like to talk about money? How do you survive out here?

**T:** Panhandling.

**A:** Do you go to the free-meal places?

**T:** Sometimes. I try to avoid a lot of the free stuff that everybody else is into. They're lame, to be honest with you.

**A:** How would you describe a typical day on the streets?

**T:** Nobody lives out here by a 9-to-5 schedule. There's no such thing as a typical day out here.

**A:** Is there anything you'd like to tell the non-homeless public about the reality of being homeless?

**T:** Don't pity us. Though "pity" can work when you're trying to panhandle.

*Some of Talon's words were altered slightly during the process of transcription for the sake of editing and brevity. — Ace Backwords*

# HOMELESS IN THE FOG

**by Julia Vinograd**

**This fog's so thick, so soiled linen heavy,**
**that the homeless climbing steep streets**
**reach the city's skyline and keep right on climbing.**
**Fog above, fog below.**
**"Now honey," a mother explains,**
**"say 'please mister,' and smile**
**and do a nice curtsy, but don't cry**
**or they'll want to get away**
**and don't start till I squeeze your hand,**
**they all want to feel they're the only one**
**you trust to help, and let me smooth your hair."**
**She reaches into the fog where her child used to be,**
**she had every detail orchestrated so closely**
**there was no room for death.**
**She hums soothingly to her chilly hand,**
**waiting for a well-dressed man**
**to walk around a warehouse in the clouds.**
**Gypsy, who always has a feather in his squashed impudent hat**
**and who ran up the hill to make fat policemen miserable,**
**sees he's walking on nothing,**
**turns and thumbs his nose in case of police helicopters,**
**then shrugs, sticks his hands in his pockets**
**ready to explore and glad he washed his hair last night.**
**You never know.**
**Further into fog. Sparechangers with plastic cups**
**were run into clouds because they offended the eye.**
**And in each plastic cup is a red offended eye,**
**throbbing and tracking like a searchlight,**
**demanding: Why am I here?**
**Is there no place on earth for me?**
**A veteran with an empty pants leg and a bottle**
**dribbling into his beard wheels his rusted chair thru fog,**
**the cheap wine turns to stars falling out of his beard**
**and then to pigeon droppings landing on the statues**
**of famous generals far below him.**
**The veteran leans over the side of his chair and spits,**
**he's hung his purple heart on his bottle opener.**
**And seeing fog instead of streets is nothing,**
**he usually sees bloody jungles instead of streets**
**when he has a flashback, though he supposes**
**this sort of thing scares civilians.**
**He wheels faster, his entire life is a hand**
**grabbing the neck of an answer and shaking.**
**Teenage lovers hold each other so close**
**their tattoos get tangled up.**
**They talk only with warm shared breath,**
**not even fog can be cold enough to forget.**
**And there's a hawking cough that belonged**
**to a muttering old bag lady with 2 yapping chihuahuas.**
**Then the dogs died and the bag lady died**
**but the cough gets bigger and bigger**
**echoing thru the fog and veined with lightning**
**like the last trump.**
**There are so many homeless, so many.**
**The fog throbs with their feet**
**and they're too tired to stop.**
**Soon there'll be no room**
**for the answer that spends all history hiding.**
**There may be no room for another day.**

# Global Women's Strike 2000

## Women of the world begin a new campaign to gain recognition and pay for unwaged workers

**by Adele McCrank and Pat Gowens**



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

**Most of the unwaged labor worldwide is performed by motherworkers who not only care for the children, but also care for the sick, disabled, injured, dying and also for the neighborhoods, schools, churches and the Earth. Doing most of this work for no wages leaves most mothers overworked, exhausted and poor.**

On March 8, 2000, International Women's Day, hundreds of thousands of women from over 200 organizations in 30 countries are taking part in a Global Women's Strike to begin the new millennium demanding that all governments include unwaged work in their economies. This Global Women's Strike was called for by the National Women's Council of Ireland and made global by International Wages for Housework.

Women's unwaged work: motherwork, care of the elderly and disabled, housework, farming, firewood-gathering, work in churches and schools, community organizing, art work, human rights work, etc., contributes at least $11 trillion to the world's economy. Society would not survive without it, yet it is unpaid and unappreciated. Women doing paid work earn only 50-70% of what men earn. Women do two-thirds of all the world's work for only 5% of the world's income, leaving most women overworked and poor.

Unwaged workers want their work counted and paid. Most unpaid workers are women. Women across the globe want: wages for caring work, pay equity for all, paid maternity leave, breast-feeding breaks, affordable and accessible housing and transportation, protection against male violence, accessible clean drinking water, and the abolition of "Third World debt."

A recent national study showed that women caring for ill or disabled family members in the U.S. contribute over $200 billion a year in unwaged work. This is the first study of its kind. Using data from five national databanks, researchers Arno, Memmott and Levine calculated that 25.8 million Americans spend an average of 18 hours a week caring for ailing relatives. If that care was paid for, it would increase health-care costs nationwide by $196 billion a year. The $200 billion contributed by unwaged workers is much greater than the entire home health care industry ($32 billion) and the nursing home industry ($83 billion). This is just one example of the massive impact of unwaged work on each government's economy.

### Strike actions around the globe

In Ireland, Women in Media of Galway, with the National Women's Council of Ireland, are organizing a petition drive for a national, paid, public holiday every year on February 1, St. Bridget's Day, to honor unwaged workers.

The Petition states: "This holiday would be an official recognition by government of the enormous contribution women have made to the wealth and health of the nation with all the unwaged work that they have done in the home, on the land, in business, in the arts, in the voluntary/community sector and for civil liberties and human rights — together with their caring work in general — and all the low-waged work they have done in the past and are still doing."

Senator David Norris has agreed to sponsor the bill. Singers, writers and Miss Ireland support the bill. All Irish women are urged to stop work on March 8, not just waged workers.

International Wages for Housework in Philadelphia is launching a Pay Equity Petition Campaign on March 8. The petition demands that the United States stop objecting to pay equity for women — equal pay for work of equal value — in national policy and in international agreements (Beijing Platform for Action, Convention to End Discrimination Against Women, and ILO Equal Remuneration Convention). They want the United States to ratify and implement provisions in international conventions entitling women to pay and benefits they have earned.

The United States is the only wealthy country where women get no paid maternity benefits or leave. The U.S. even opposes international agreements calling for paid breastfeeding breaks for workers. The Pay Equity Petition points out that "underpaying women is a massive subsidy to employers that is both sexist and racist. By opposing pay equity in international forums, the U.S. government encourages multinational corporations to underpay women everywhere in the global economy."

Wages for women in the U.S. have dropped from 76% of white men's earnings to 73% for white women, 62% for black women and 53% for Latina women.

### Global jingles and songs

In Barcelona, Spain, women on the European and Latin American Network of Pirate Radios (Women Creating Communication Spaces) are circulating a Spanish tape. The tape has a two-minute jingle and a radio program of interviews of people saying why they support the strike. Trade unions will have a one-hour stop. Women are coordinating weekly meetings working with church groups, immigrants, lesbians, students, childcare workers, social workers and university staff. Men are offering donations and asking for information on how to support the strike.

In the Philippines, organizers are publicizing the strike and its objectives on radio, TV, print and Internet, and organizing a speaker's bureau. They're lobbying for a Presidential proclamation making March 8, International Women's Day, a paid holiday. They're making March 8 "No Housework Day" and organizing women's parties and picnics so women enjoy themselves and send the message that they had enough of overwork and need time for themselves. They also named March 8 a "No Shopping Day" to protest the way the consumer and health industries have made profits and taken over the lives of women. They're starting a network to continue the objectives of the strike after March 8, 2000.

Women are promoting the strike in Albania and Kosovo. They translated the radio jingle into Albanian, Macedonian, Serbo-Croatian and Serbian. In Kingston, Ontario, Raging Grannies will be striking and marching to the tune of, *Put Your Arms Around Me, Honey, Hold Me Tight:*

*Women of the world,*
*Let us throw off our chains,*
*Let us have a taste of economic gains,*
*Oh Oh*

*March 8 we will strike*
*With all women we'll unite,*
*We want women's work made a priority,*
*International Women's Day a holiday.*

*Oh, Oh*
*Housework done for pay,*
*Third World debt canceled today.*
*Celebrate the women who are in your life,*
*Mother, sister, granny, auntie, daughter, wife.*

*Oh, Oh,*
*I always knew what a woman could do.*

In Ecuador, The National Council of Women is holding conferences to discuss waged and unwaged domestic work. They want to connect this work to Social Security (welfare and pensions). Ecuador's constitution recognizes unwaged housework as productive.

In Pakistan, about 1000 women and girls of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan are demonstrating in Islamabad on International Human Rights Day.

In Peru, indigenous women and domestic workers are using their radio program "Soncco Warmi" ("Heart of woman," in Quechua) Monday through Friday to educate and lobby for recognition of their work. They state: "Women of the Andes contribute more than 50% of the family income through agriculture — women sow, weed, harvest, take care of the animals — but the state doesn't take into account that we grow and prepare the food. Our work is not included in the national budget. Women also take care of

*See* **Women's Strike 2000** *page 19*

## FURNISHED ROOM

**by Julia Vinograd**

**The only window looks out on a wall,**
**light always the same cement grey.**
**Her eyes are grey, were they always grey?**
**A bed, a dresser, a sink in the closet.**
**Hot water faucet's been stuck for years.**
**Bathroom's down the hall,**
**nice girls don't go there.**
**The wiring would work fine**
**if nobody lived here,**
**but what with hotplates and heaters**
**that only heat two inches around them**
**fuses do blow and the elevator goes out.**
**Walls wear her away.**
**Soap washes off her fingerprints.**
**The damp stain in the upper left corner**
**is clearer than the mirror.**
**Every night the stain grows,**
**every day her future shrinks.**
**She can scream because nothing happens**
**but the clunk of the radiator is more alive,**
**it's been in the room longer.**
**Cold water faucet leaks, not much,**
**but it doesn't stop.**
**It drips into her memories,**
**the colors smear**
**and then fade.**
**Was her hair red, once?**

## Bangladesh Bargain

**by Walter Liggett**

**Bangladesh bargain:**
**bright red cap, with brim.**
**A dollar puts it on my head.**
**Who made this red cap?**
**Woman textile worker,**
**perhaps paid $2.00 a week?**

**Post-purchase reflection,**
**nine hours after I bought.**

## Always Generous

**by Barbara A. Liggett**

**No one else wanted to help her on the bus.**
**And she didn't even have a bus pass.**
**She was trying to remember if**
**she had fed her goats.**
**Walnuts are like gold. I gave her a dollar,**
**and she offered me her lunch**
**of a few walnuts.**
**"The rich are never generous,**
**but the poor are always generous!"**

# 'We value people just because they're human'

## A talk with Rachel McLean of the Haight-Ashbury Youth Outreach Team

***"There's a war on drugs and there's a war on youth, so youth who use drugs are pretty much at the bottom of the barrel in some people's eyes..."***

**As told to Ivy McClelland**

When I was 14, I left home for a little while. I'd go to the Haight every day to hang out and buy drugs. For a few years I went between living at home and living on the streets. One night I was really drunk and someone brought me to a squat on 3rd and Mission — that's how I ended up squatting.

Basically, my experience with outreach workers was that they hounded me with bleach and condoms. I had so many condoms I didn't know what to do with them. And I didn't shoot up — I used other drugs. I felt frustrated that the outreach workers didn't have what I needed: they didn't have tampons, candles for squatting, or blankets.

For me that's where the story begins — feeling that my needs weren't being met and that the outreach workers weren't culturally sensitive by any means.

In the span of five years I traveled and got clean and came back to San Francisco. I was in standing in a line while applying to City College and saw a flyer that said:

*Do you want to fight AIDS? Come join our peer education program.*

It totally changed my life. I did HIV peer education for two years, teaching other students about HIV and safe sex. From that, I realized my dream was to work on Haight Street with homeless kids because that was my scene and I wanted to give back to the community. I actually went to the Haight-Ashbury Youth Outreach Team (HAYOT) to ask if I could volunteer, and they said "no," they didn't accept volunteers.

From there I got a job at the AIDS office where I met Tia Martinez, who was doing the 'zine and leather workshops with homeless kids in the Haight, and volunteered with her. In August of 1996, HAYOT was hiring an outreach worker. I applied for the job and got it and have been working there ever since. I believe that if you envision what you want to do — even if it's three years down the road — you're gonna get to do it if you don't give up.

When I started I was only 20 years old. I'd never worked this kind of job, and I didn't know what the hell I was doing. I really wanted to do the work but I was intimidated — being young and talking to kids on the street who were super hardcore. It took me a while to gain the trust of the kids and figure out what I was doing. HAYOT at that time was really big: there were seven staff (currently three).

I followed Amanda, an outreach worker there, asking her tons of questions, like: "What are you doing? Explain to me, what are you doing?" Just figuring out how to do referrals, how to talk to the kids, 'cause it's really different. Just because you've been there doesn't mean you're gonna know how to do the work and I didn't realize that. I learned it as I went. I watched the way Amanda worked, took what I liked from her style and developed my own.

HAYOT provides street outreach, safe injection and hygiene supplies, medical, legal and advocacy referrals, help obtaining I.D. and employment, free pet care, food, education about safe injection and pregnancy prevention, and we provide emotional and practical support. We do all the things a case manager does, without the paperwork. We don't do intakes!



Art by Christa Occhiogrosso

**"Violence and safety are the big issues for women. I see a lot of women who have been physically and/or sexually assaulted on the street. I like the idea of women feeling safe in the world."**

We are dedicated to serving the youth that nobody else wants to deal with. We practice harm reduction: we meet people where they're at; we don't penalize kids for using drugs. There are other youth programs which serve the needs of youth who want to get off the streets. I see us serving people who are 10 steps behind there, and who may not ever get to that place. But we're still gonna be there and we're still gonna care.

We were evicted while our manager was out of town for two months. We had a space at Haight and Masonic for a year and a half, but we got evicted from there, too. The manager left, so Bridget Prince and I had to take control of HAYOT. They were closing down the front of Golden Gate Park, the cops were cracking down, more and more young kids were using heroin, El Niño happened — so we *had* to take charge of the program.

We don't have a drop-in center anymore. We now have only an office space and a couch. We are extremely limited in what we can do without a drop-in center. I've noticed that a lot of the kids' health deteriorated without a space to chill, take showers, make food or make phone calls. I think it's a mental health thing.

When kids are on survival mode all the time they greatly appreciated the drop-in — to come in, rest and feel safe. It's two dollars a square foot for spaces in the Haight, which we can't afford. We had an offer for one space — with the provision that none of the kids could come in — and we turned it down.

We've always been targeted by neighbors who don't like the services we provide. The way I see it, there's a war on drugs and there's a war on youth, so youth who use drugs are pretty much at the bottom of the barrel in some people's eyes, although I think older homeless people have it pretty hard, too.

I got into this work because of my experience as a young woman going through my stuff. Some of the kids think I'm biased toward women. I'll specifically find out what their needs are because I see that a lot of girls' needs are overshadowed. Pregnancy is a big issue because it's difficult to be pregnant on the street and gain access to services.

I see lots of couples who both use drugs where the man is the one who shoots up the woman. When the woman doesn't have control of her drug use, neither will she with the consequences, such as overdose, abscesses, hepatitis or HIV.

I've seen lots of domestic violence on the street. And that's something I had to learn how to do: talk non-judgmentally to men who are battering their girlfriends. That's been challenging for me, but I also feel like it's been a great experience because both parties are human.

Violence and safety are the big issues for women. I see a lot of women who have been physically and/or sexually assaulted on the street. I like the idea of women feeling safe in the world.

I'm part of a peer-taught women's self-defense collective called Girl Army, and I want to make it more accessible to the girls I work with who want it. Girl Army has been around for five years. I took the class; now I help teach it. It's a six-week basic skills course that deals with boundaries, physical self-defense, and verbal skills. It's free if you don't have any money, and it's now open to transgendered people.

We live in a society where you're only valued if you produce. *We* value people just because they're human. I've realized in this work that street outreach is not enough. You have to do advocacy in City Hall, work with the Treatment on Demand Planning Council to inform the bureaucrats of what's really going on, get the word out — as well as help kids navigate through the system for medical and welfare and legal needs.

I've spoken at the National AIDS Update Conference and the San Francisco Bridging the Gap harm reduction conference. A lot of service providers have conditional terms for their services. We don't. One thing I'll never forget is what Julian, my old co-worker at HAYOT, used to say: "All you can ever hope to do is not plant the seed, but just loosen the soil."

We're just loosening the soil for people to think about anything beyond the moment they're in, because survival mode on the streets is really a different experience. When you're hustling to get a bed every night you don't have the luxury to think about the future. It takes patience and unconditional love to let that process happen naturally. It's hard work.

I feel the effects of burn-out and not having support philosophically for the work that we do. But I've also seen how our work has influenced other people, and that gives me hope and inspiration.

*Ivy McLelland is part of Raising Our Voices, a Media Alliance program that trains homeless people in investigative reporting.*

HAYOT is located at 529 Clayton (between Haight and Page streets) on the 3rd floor. Call (415) 565-1942. The next Girl Army training is Sunday, March 5 to April 9 from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Capp St. Community Center, 362 Capp St. (between 18th and 19th streets). If interested leave your name and number on Girl Army's Voicemail: (415) 835-4728.

## SOJOURNERS

*(for our brief time on earth)*

**by Clair J. Baker**

**Seekers of the exotic, riders of water or wind, shapers of jewels and images, builders of bridges and breakthroughs, explorers of the psyche, embryos this moment conceived,**

**whatever we will be tomorrow, in a hundred years, or at the last turn of the earth under moonlight's incantations, let us lean toward the unspoken language of roses.**

## She Sleeps Alone

**by Michael Creedon**

**I can't go on like this any more,**
**Hanging out by Berkeley BART and**
**Smoking cigarettes and listening to**
**The hassles that are the only things**
**That liven things up.**
**I've gotta out of here,**
**But where would I go?**
**I've got no money, my boyfriend's**
**Mad at me. He hates me, wants to kill me.**
**I've gotta get out of here.**

**The people keep coming out of BART**
**And I keep asking them for change.**
**Sometimes some of them give me some.**
**It's two in the afternoon and**
**Here comes that loser Joneseebeans.**
**He just keeps on bugging me.**
**He wants to get in my pants**
**And get a little money as well.**
**Good ole Joneseebeans, keeps on coming**
**Around. Howya doin', Joneseebeans?**
**Wanna buy me some lunch?**
**I'm just a hungry girl.**
**Joneseebeans gives me a hot dog.**
**Umm, good, I eat it. Symbolic, I guess.**

**It's getting dark. I've got**
**Six dollars and some change.**
**I'll work some magic**
**And make it last.**
**Joneseebeans will never know.**
**I'll sleep the same place this night**
**As I did last. I'll sleep**
**In my sleeping bag**
**In the park**
**Alone.**

# Hundreds Converge on State Capitol to Oppose Expansion of Forced Treatment

**by Paul Baber**

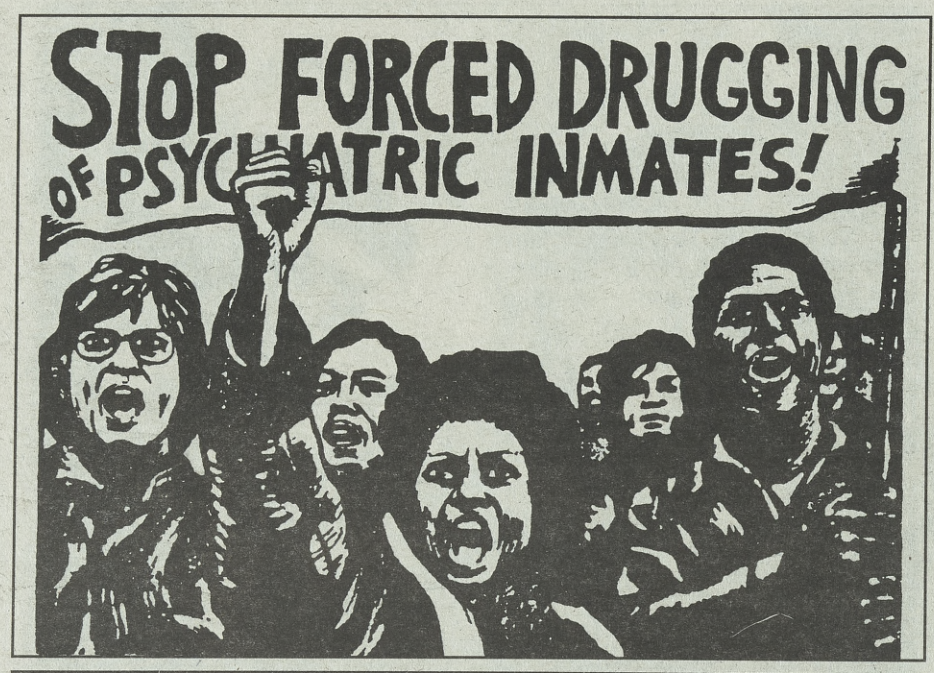
On February 28, approximately 300 persons converged on the State Capitol to rally against Assembly Bill 1800, carried by State Assemblywoman Helen Thomson (D-Davis). Thomson's bill calls for an expansion of forced psychiatric treatment and outpatient commitment, and would take away many of the hard-won civil rights won by mental-health consumers over the past two decades.

Many persons attending the rally wore T-shirts or buttons with inverted triangles. This symbolized, as California Network of Mental Health Clients Executive Director Sally Zinman stated, the plight of thousands of mentally ill persons in Nazi Germany, who were among the first to be euthanized.

At a morning press conference preceding the rally, numerous members of the Coalition Advocating for Rights, Empowerment, and Services (C.A.R.E.S.) spoke out against A.B. 1800. Among the speakers was Betty Dahlquist, executive director of the California Association of Social Rehabilitation Agencies (CASRA), who said that outpatient commitment is unwarranted, explaining that many states have enacted outpatient commitment legislation with little to show for it.

Dahlquist said that CASRA engaged in an exhaustive study of research material pertaining to outpatient commitment and found that there is no substantive material supporting it. Subsequently, CASRA issued and distributed widely its position paper in opposition to outpatient commitment.

Joining the rally and leading the gathering in a number of songs, including the famous "Doctor Freud" song, was Jeanie




**Many persons attending the rally wore T-shirts or buttons with inverted triangles, symbolizing the plight of thousands of mentally ill persons in Nazi Germany, who were among the first to be euthanized.**

Matulis, a well-known attorney who specializes in mental health advocacy.

*"Dr. Freud, Dr. Freud, we wish*
*you had been otherwise employed.*
*The set of circumstances*
*sure enhances the finances*
*of the followers of Dr. Sigmund Freud."*

During the open mike segment of the program, many people spoke out about the harm and abuse they had suffered as a result of forced or involuntary treatment. Speakers decried A.B. 1800, saying that it would allow for more and longer stays in psychiatric hospitals. Other speakers told the rally that there is already too much forced treatment, and that what is needed are "Recovery Centers," not more coerced psychiatric treatment.

Ted Chabasinski, directing attorney for Mental Health Consumer Concerns in Contra Costa County, spoke about the tremendous harm that he incurred as a result of involuntary hospitalization and forced treatment.

A member of the Coalition on Homelessness in San Francisco mentioned an interesting report done by the San Francisco Police Department. The report states that, in 1999, only five percent of violent confrontations between police and citizens involved mentally ill persons. This report, he said, was done in the city and county that has more 5150s (forced placements in psychiatric hospitals) than any other city or county in California.

Dave Schroeder, the Community Center Coordinator in Martinez, spoke of the damage that A.B. 1800 would do if enacted. Schroeder said that there would be an increase in the criteria for what persons can be involuntarily treated for; subsequently, many homeless persons would be forced into treatment.

Schroeder raised the fact that $350 million is attached to A.B. 1800, and that this money could go to funding Community Centers throughout the state, which have proven to be beneficial in terms of keeping persons out of psychiatric hospitals.

In the afternoon, people made visits to their respective legislators. Assemblyman Tom Torlakson was very supportive of our cause and mentioned the importance of self-help. Senator Richard Rainey listened attentively, as did many others. Most legislators seemed to give the message that A.B. 1800 is very controversial in nature and will have a difficult time in the Assembly.

On March 14, the bill will be heard in the State Assembly Health Committee. Persons are urged to attend this hearing and speak out against this proposed legislation that is an attack on the civil and human rights of so many Californians.

Paul Baber is the editor of the Contra Costa Network of Mental Health Clients' newsletter, *The Times of Enlightenment.* For more information, call the California Network of Mental Health Clients at their toll-free number: 1-800-626-7447.

# Palo Alto Bans Roadside Panhandling

**by Purusha Obluda**

As February continues to dump great amounts of rain on the housed and the homeless alike, the men and women who direct the laws and policies in Palo Alto, one of the most affluent cities in the nation, make headlines that reflect an unbalanced approach in our culture toward the problems posed by the poorest of the poor.

Within a brief period we have read local stories like these: "Palo Alto adopts limits on begging — Homeless advocates protest: Officials insist issue is one of safety, not discrimination." Or this more hopeful headline: "Millions raised for homeless—San Mateo County Agency raises money to build family shelter, supplement programs." Or another less charitable: "Palo Alto business groups nix homeless advocates' plan to buy downtown site for drop-In shelter."

But while business groups and city officials too often refuse to develop needed housing and homeless services, the community still mobilizes in support of the basic requirements of justice.

Another reads: "Coalition demands affordable housing in Palo Alto." That headline is attached to this story: "Up to 1,000 people are expected to show up Monday in Palo Alto to pressure lawmakers to back an aggressive plan for affordable housing. It has been proposed by Peninsula Interfaith Action, a group of 21 religious congregations."

Take your choice: the relative success of developing new services in San Mateo County, or the continuing failure to ease the plight of the unhoused in the cities of northern Santa Clara County, the heart of Silicon Valley, perhaps the richest single area in the country.

**Investment broker Paul Gilbert told the council that it would be legal for him to stand at a curb with a sign supporting Mayor Liz Kniss in her race for county supervisor, but not to hold a sign saying he was hungry and penniless.**

Patrick Dwyer, the new Palo Alto chief of police, spearheaded the anti-panhandling ordinance which will forbid standing on the media dividers at the Stanford Shopping Center and along El Camino Real near the Town and Country Village shopping center. Dwyer made the old claim that he only wants to assure the safety of panhandlers and motorists alike. Some who spoke at the City Hall vote on the issue pointed out that there have been no cases of accidents or injuries caused by homeless people holding up signs near the entrances to the shopping centers in question.

Retail business owners have pushed hard for the spate of anti-homeless measures passed in the last five years by the Palo Alto City Council — this despite remarkable sales and profits in the city of about 60,000. Last year's sales figures at the Stanford Shopping Center were up 8 percent over the previous year, almost reaching the one billion dollar mark.

Chief Dwyer insists that the new anti-panhandling law is not aimed at the poor, adding that if groups like the Girl Scouts should try to sell cookies in the forbidden places, they would be cited just as quickly as panhandlers who ask for help.

Larry Duncan, a longtime advocate for the unhoused and often homeless himself, tells me that the steady pressure from the Palo Alto police has cut the number of homeless people here over the past five years from perhaps 150 to around 80-100.

Paul Gilbert, an insurance and investment broker who has struggled for years to convince the business community that it should support a positive program to help the homeless, told the council members that it would be legal for him to stand at a curb with a sign supporting Mayor Liz Kniss in her race for county supervisor, but not to hold a sign saying he was hungry and penniless.

Mayor Kniss, who has over the years voted for every anti-homeless measure, was one of the five councilmembers who passed the ordinance. The vote was 5-4 in favor, indicating a slight improvement over the last big issue, when the council voted 7-2 to allow anyone sitting on the sidewalks of Palo Alto to be cited without any evidence that they were blocking traffic. Chief Dwyer and the councilmembers insist that the "no sit-no lie" law and the new anti-panhandling ordinance are necessary to give the police the tools they need to deal with the handful of panhandlers in the city.

Meanwhile it continues cold and windy with lots of rain. The unsheltered poor gather each morning at the Urban League's drop-in center at the Red Cross building, for coffee and bus passes. The center is still outside and unsheltered from the weather, two years after the site was flooded by heavy rains. And Chamber of Commerce types say of the plan to open a new shelter: "Not downtown. It discourages shoppers to see homeless people in the center

## Millennium Challenge

**by Lynda Cobden**

**A weary rain-soaked homeless woman said,**
**I'm hungry, in a weak voice. I have not eaten in two days.**
**The ten homeless people near her reached into their pockets**
**and gave from their meager resources to her.**

**The spirit of giving is alive with those who have so little.**
**To whom much is given much is expected!**
**The purchase of a Street Spirit newspaper fans the fire**
**of independence and self esteem and points**
**to a new path for the vendor.**

**The purchase of a Street Spirit subscription**
**provides a package of homeless news and inspiration**
**which will arrive in your mail box each month.**

**In the law we have quid pro quo, the concept of**
**receiving something for something.**
**You will be giving to help create a new tomorrow**
**and you will be receiving your Street Spirit paper.**
**Millennium woman, millennium man**
**you will be responding to a calling.**

# WE'RE ALL THE SAME IN THE RAIN

**When the rain comes, old grudges dissolve beneath a humble shelter as men and women of all classes, races, and colors nudge together to stay warm and dry.**

**by Robert Stevens**

For the man or woman who has been homeless for any length of time, it eventually becomes clear that while there are several strata and classes of homelessness, we're all pretty much the same. We're all the same in the rain.

Sometimes one who has a dollar might sneer at the one who only has a dime, and the ones who camp out in rest stops in the country might consider themselves in a separate class than the skid row hobo, but the rain tests us all. When the rain comes, old grudges dissolve beneath a humble shelter as men and women of all classes, races, and colors nudge together to stay warm and dry.

When the dark clouds and the rains come, the mind of the homeless person turns inward, surveying the immediate situation, the present feelings of hopelessness. We sense the damp millstone of poverty and despair around our necks which only the warmth and joy of summer seems to lift. Sometimes a bottle of wine helps, too.

Despair: the poor man's equalizer. If it wasn't for despair, we homeless loners would never agree that we have anything in common. Hell, I didn't believe I was homeless until after I had been living in a junkyard for a few years.

"Homeless?" I would say incredulously. With a bottle of 100-proof whiskey in one hand, I'd make a grand sweeping gesture with the other toward a yawning landscape of wrecked Fords, Chevys, coupes and pickup trucks, insisting, "Hell, this is my home — I'm happy."

Looking back, I suppose I was happy a lot of the time, but I was a lot younger then, too. The years flowed past like winter's gutter water.

Not so surprisingly, my despair at being homeless deepened in proportion to the depth of my drinking. Unwilling to admit I could not stop boozing, I drank to ease my depression, a depression which would greet me at the dawn's first light saying, "Howdy, Bob. I'm back again — here, have a drink." I drank. And I drank.

I lived in my car and I lived in rented rooms; then I got kicked out of the rooms. I lost my car, lost everything I owned, slept in carports, parks, and missions, got my stuff back, then lost it again forever. And all the while my crowning glory was a bottle of anything, and as long as I could remain drunk, paying for my own booze, I thought everything would turn out hunky-dory for me — the elite drunken poet.

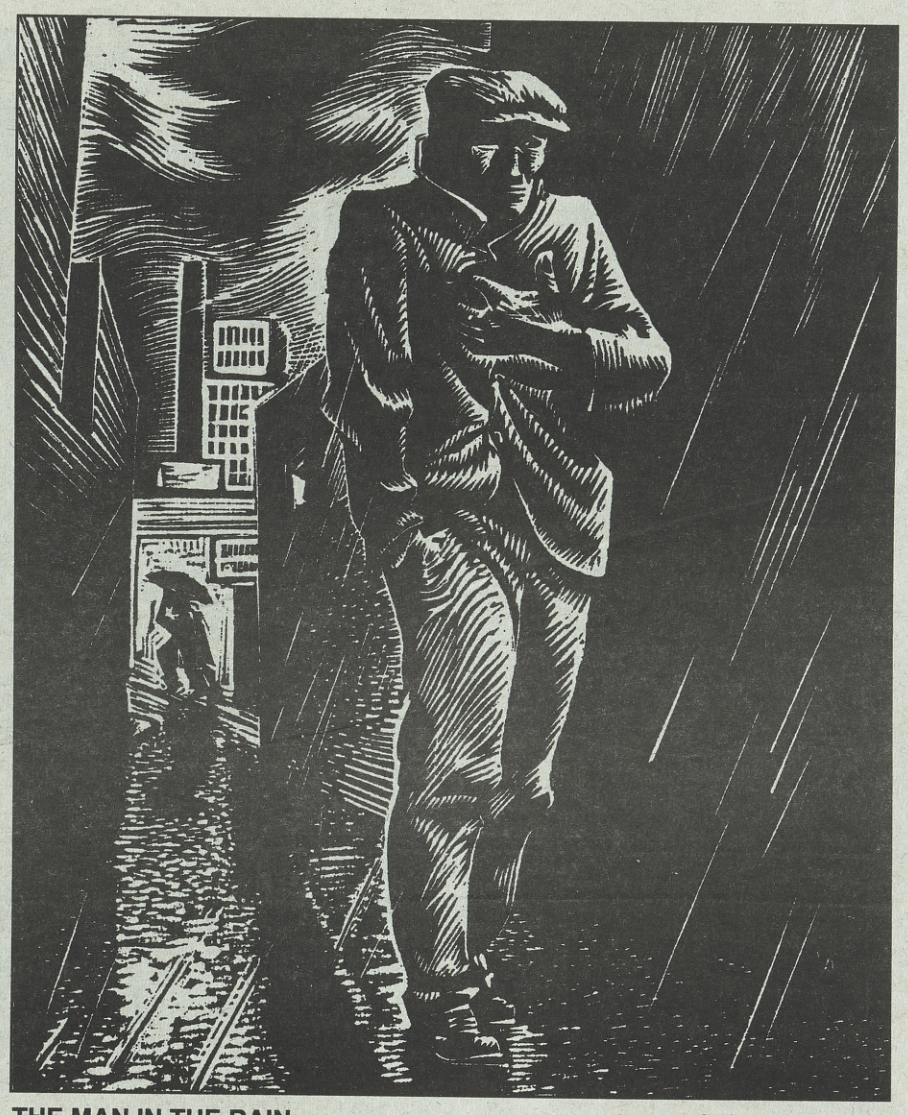
But the rain wore me down. Any reason was good enough for me to stay shit-faced drunk, and only in rare fleeting moments of lucidity did I dare to admit to myself the real reason that I stayed drunk.

"Jesus Christ," I'd moan in the midst of a relentless bender, "I don't think I can stop."

I'd puke up five drinks before I could keep the sixth one down. I hated myself for the foolish waste of good wine and money. I couldn't afford to puke.

At a mission in Santa Rosa, I envied a man who had a foam pad to sleep on for the night, and a backpack better than mine. I suppose that at this point I was fast approaching my bottom, but I couldn't see that I had become a homeless wino.

It would be several more years of hell before I would arrive at the Beacon House in San Pedro, where I have been living clean and sober for nearly two years now. Drunk, rain-drenched, and depressed, I knew that hope existed, but even if I had known about the Beacon House then, I would not have gone there.



THE MAN IN THE RAIN

Art by Victor Arnautoff

"Those kind of people are losers," I often said about those who went crawling to a 12-step program for help. "They've thrown in the towel — gave up, the pansies. Now they're doomed to kiss ass for the rest of their lives."

Now I'm one of the "losers," and my miserable life has gotten better. I've had to go through some bullshit, but I haven't had to kiss anyone's ass. Never will. Some things don't change, I suppose.

Sometimes I look across the street from Beacon House, and I see the guys in the park sipping short-dogs and 40-ouncers, and a part of me still wants to be there with them. I'm still homeless, like them, but just at a different level.

"Transitionally homeless," the experts call it. Horseshit. When it rains, I get just as wet as the winos.

# From Bomb Threat to Beacon House

***The 12-step program is spiritual demolitions training. My inner time-bomb can be re-armed at any time if I become lazy and complacent, and I'm grateful to The Man Upstairs for preventing me from blowing myself to smithereens.***

**by Robert Stevens**

I had my second shot at stardom when I was interviewed on January 15 by reporter Stacey Gualandi for a segment of *Inside Edition* that featured Ashley Peterson, founder of the ReRead program which donates reading material to the homeless.

The filming crew swooped upon the Beacon House Association of San Pedro, where I have lived clean and sober for almost two years now, and began to film as soon as I greeted them. Gualandi began taping and asking questions as I eagerly greeted Ashley Peterson, and nibbled a donut from the two dozen that she had brought to share.

"So, just what is Beacon House?" Gualandi asked, pointing the microphone at my donut-smacking mouth. I talked around the chocolate buttermilk bar.

"Beacon House is a nonprofit program that helps homeless men to recover from substance abuse, and go on to lead responsible, productive lives," I said, repeating the Beacon House mission statement almost verbatim. Then I added, "We just learn how to live life on life's terms." Gualandi nodded.

We toured the Beacon House briefly, then filmed Peterson, me, and some of the other Beacon House men in our recreation area handling the ReRead magazines. From start to finish the interview lasted about an hour, then Gualandi, Peterson, and the film crew packed up their gear and, I assume, hightailed it back to Hollywood.

A few days later I received a videotape in the mail. The first time I was ever on TV they didn't send a taped copy to me.

It was 1995, and I was drunkenly shuffling to the courthouse in Santa Rosa, California, to be sentenced for Driving Under the Influence, a preposterous charge, I thought. I stopped into a fast-food outlet on Steele Lane for a bite to eat. I ordered a cheap hamburger that almost ended up being my last meal.

**At the Sonoma County jail I was greeted by excited inmates who clamored to have me brought to their ward of the jail. "Hey, send us Demolition Man!" they hollered when they saw the police lead me to the gate, shackled and chained. This cheered me.**

I don't recall much, but I do know that I made a wisecrack about having "a pound of C-4 (a plastic explosive) and a detonator" in my knapsack. Ha, ha. Just kidding. As I peacefully ate my burger, someone must have called the police.

When I walked outside for my after-meal cigarette, all hell broke loose. Armed men converged on me from all sides, weapons drawn and aimed to kill, hollering, "Get Down! Get Down! Get the *#@* Down!" as they rushed up to thrust my face down into the pavement, cuff me, and truss me up like a Christmas turkey with nylon straps.

They picked me up duffelbag-style and unceremoniously dumped me into the squad car to haul me off to the Sonoma County jail. I was stunned.

At the Sonoma County jail I was greeted by excited inmates who clamored to have me brought to their ward of the jail.

"Hey, send us Demolition Man!" they hollered when they saw the police lead me to the gate, shackled and chained. This cheered me. I may have even looked dangerous at the time, but I was scared. I gave a weak smile and tried not to laugh.

I later found out that my fellow jailbirds had been awaiting my arrival since seeing me on TV that afternoon. I didn't see the footage myself, but when I was released from jail I got a copy of the *Press Democrat* newspaper and read the caption under my picture on the front page, accompanied by photos of the bomb squad.

It seems I had closed down Steele Lane, a major street near Santa Rosa's Coddingtown, for over 90 minutes. The bomb squad was called in, and they crept up warily to investigate the contents of my knapsack.

First it was X-rayed, then it was opened. The newspaper shows an officer in full bomb squad armor and equipment, removing my spiral-bound notebook from my knapsack. Also packed in there were a pair of dirty jeans, and my journal.

That was five years ago, and it has been a long haul for me to change from terrorist to teetotaler, losing everything I owned along the way.

It wasn't until 1998 that I finally made it to the Beacon House, beaten down, skinny and humble. If I had known about the Beacon House in 1995, I would not have gone there to recover from my alcoholism, because I felt that people in 12-step programs were losers, quitters who just couldn't hang tough and handle their liquor, like me.

Today I'm one of the "losers," but I've lost only the compulsion to drink. I could have been killed that day in 1995, and I realize now that the real time bomb was planted between my ears, and the ticking couldn't have stopped unless I had asked for help.

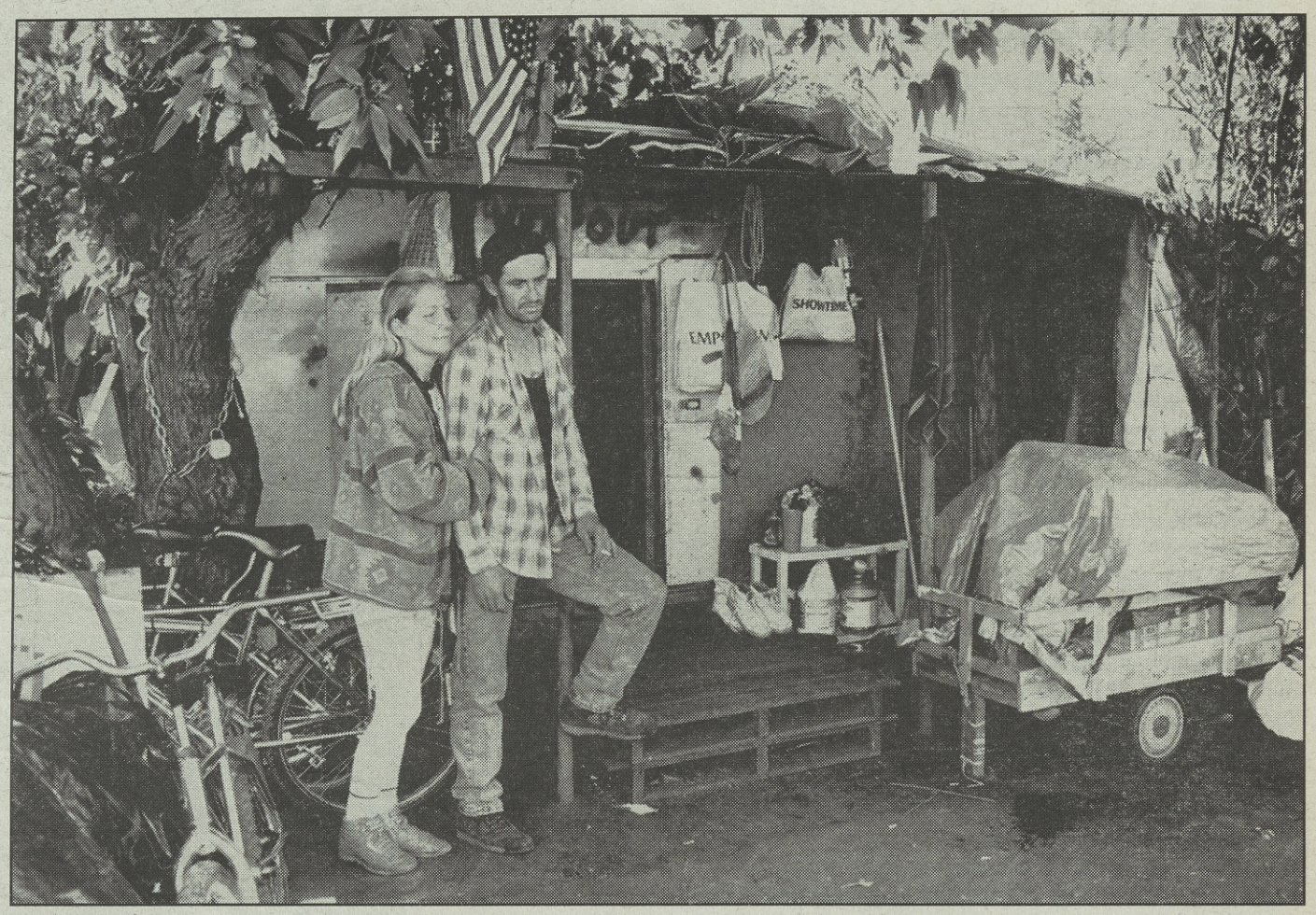
These days I'm a published writer, poet, and a college student. For now, I live at the Beacon House, and I still attend 12-step meetings and read the literature because, for me, the 12-step program is spiritual demolitions training. You see, my inner time-bomb can be re-armed at any time if I become lazy and complacent, and I'm grateful to The Man Upstairs for preventing me from blowing myself to smithereens.

Staying clean and sober is not easy — it's hard work, but the show must go on, one day at a time. As they say in Hollywood, that's show biz.

# Resisting the Root Causes of Homelessness

*Editor's note: This is the first of a two-part series by Dr. Talmadge Wright, professor of political science at San Francisco State, that investigates the deeper political, social and economic factors underlying widespread homelessness and poverty. This first installment uncovers the systemic economic causes of homelessness. Next month, Wright will explore the solutions needed to alleviate poverty.*

**by Talmadge Wright**




**This homeless couple was driven out of their shack in Concord by police who demolished the encampment.** Jan Spence photo

**As more people living in the streets are arrested for violating panhandling or camping ordinances or harassed into hiding in remote areas, their disappearance from tourist areas and public spaces creates the illusion that homelessness as a social problem is ending.**

**Deepening poverty and homelessness, decreasing low-income housing, and a failing health policy are the surface effects of a deeper cause: the success of the neoliberal market model of capitalism in transferring wealth to a national elite at the expense of the majority of U.S. citizens.**

The increase in numbers of people without homes both nationally and internationally reflects the deep neglect of basic human needs within modern capitalist society — a "social indicator" masking the decline of the welfare state and the rise of monetarist neoliberal economic strategies.

Homelessness will end only with the recognition that all societies have a responsibility to provide their citizens with decent and affordable housing, excellent health care, stable, meaningful, and well-paid employment, and freedom from arbitrary exercise of state and private authority. Ending homelessness is about creating a truly democratic human society beyond the barbarism of the current stock of social inequalities and economic and political violence.

The combination of rapid integration and monopolization of transnational corporations and the application of neoliberal economic policies of deregulation, privatization, and imposed financial austerity measures, accelerates the accumulation of finance capital at the expense of working families and the poor, locally, nationally, and internationally. These privileges, in turn, generate extremes of social inequalities on the international, national, and local levels, putting populations at risk of losing their shelter.

### THE POOR GROW EVEN POORER

Since the 1980s, when people without homes first engaged the public consciousness, the poor have grown poorer and have included more women with children, and higher numbers of African Americans and Latinos. Most studies indicate that people without homes come predominantly from the bottom 20 percent of the population, from the ranks of the very poor. As Hopper and Milburn (1996) and Baker (1994) have observed, most of the urban homeless tend to be African American, Latino, and Native American, those segments of the population overrepresented among the poor.

From the 1990 count of homeless persons conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, African Americans make up close to half of families without homes and over one-third of individuals without homes living on the streets (Hopper and Milburn, 1996). Given that people of color are disproportionately represented within the ranks of the poor and very poor, it is not surprising to find such a representation among those living without shelter.

It is generally agreed that approximately one-quarter to one-third of people living on the street have some kind of serious mental disability, and a higher percentage suffer from substance abuse. Attributing these descriptors of disability to causes, however, is problematic (Snow, Baker, Anderson, and Martin, 1986).

While the figures vary, it is generally acknowledged that approximately 60 to 70 percent of those without shelter are single males and approximately 30 percent are women with children. Of the latter group, children and youth comprise a growing category of the homeless population. While most of the shelter population is comprised of single women and children, most of those living on the streets are single males.

Studies conducted in the 1980s used widely inflated estimates, in the millions, to dramatize the nature and scope of people without shelter. However, the U.S. Bureau of Census, in a deeply flawed study, came up with a figure of about *200,000 unhoused people in 1990. Since* counting the numbers of people who are actually homeless is a major methodological challenge, it is safer to use the estimates of increased shelter and food bank use as well as homeless episodes.

Most people who experience a loss of housing do so occasionally, existing at or near the poverty level. This segment of the population moves in and out of homelessness depending upon the state of the economy and the availability of resources.

From 1985 through 1990, over 5.7 million people reported having episodes of homelessness. (Link, Susser, Sueve, and Phelan, 1994); 26 million people are estimated to have experienced times without shelter over their lifetime in the United States. Wolch and Dear (1993) estimated that between 840,000 and one million people experienced episodes of homelessness in 1991 alone.

If we look at shelter requests, what is clear is the steady increase of demand for needed homeless services over the past two decades. In 1998, requests for emergency shelter increased by an average of 11 percent from 1997, in 72 percent of the 30 major cities surveyed by the US. Conference of Mayors (1999). Twenty-six percent of the requests for shelter were denied. Due to a lack of resources, 67 percent of the cities surveyed had to turn away families and individuals who had no shelter, at a time when the number of shelter beds in the surveyed cities remained constant and transitional housing units increased by only 11 percent. City officials identified lack of affordable housing as the lead cause of homelessness.

### GLOBAL RISE IN HOMELESSNESS

Declining incomes for the bottom 20 percent of the population, the decline in the absolute numbers of low-income housing units relative to the need, and an impoverished community-based health care system define the immediate context of homelessness not only in the United States (Shinn and Gillespie, 1994) but increasingly worldwide. According to the United Nations Center for Human Settlements, 40 million people were estimated to be without shelter globally during the 1980s (Bingham, Green, and White, 1987). In 1996, the Habitat II conference held in Istanbul, Turkey, estimated that the numbers of people without homes had increased worldwide to 100 million, with over one billion people suffering from inadequate shelter.

The fall of the Soviet Union and the rise of a market economy in Russia witnessed an increase in people living on the streets. In Germany, families looking for shelter often live under bridges, in tents, and in squatter camps. Glasser (1994) estimated that in Cologne 45,000 people were living in emergency shelters. Mayer (1996) documented 15 housing encampments each containing about 300 people in and around Berlin.

In Japan, single men without a fixed residence live in the tunnels of Tokyo, often suffering from some variation of mental illness or substance abuse. Even in a country with a very high social wage such as Sweden, housing authorities have worked to exclude people rendered homeless by the open housing market when those people are perceived as costly, where "costs... exceed the possible revenue from rents" (Sahlin 1997).

While the Netherlands claims an unhoused population estimated at between 17,500 and 34,000, the causes have often been attributed to traditional forms of disaffiliation, such as substance abuse and loss of family supports. However, Deben and Greshoff (1997) argue that the move toward increasing urban gentrification, the reduction of government subsidies for social housing, and the influx of immigrants without adequate income guarantees will expand the ranks of the homeless, converting a problem of disabilities into one of poverty.

The numbers of people without shelter are even higher in developing countries, such as Brazil and Mexico, that have embraced "free" market economies.

The initial policy response by the United States and other countries to the expanding numbers of people losing their homes was to expand emergency services such as shelters and food banks. In the United States, the passage of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in 1987 guaranteed federal support for homeless services; fiscal support increased from $180 million in 1987 to almost $1.8 billion in 1994.

When this did not reduce the numbers of people living without shelter, elite attitudes hardened. This has forced a more punitive response from local politicians and policy makers: criminalization and containment. (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 1999; Barak, 1992; Stoner, 1995; Fischer, 1992).

Discouraging loitering in public places, anti-camping and anti-panhandling ordinances, and arrests or detention for "quality of life" crimes are complemented by the attempt to contain homeless persons in institutional shelters and facilities — out of sight of the general public, especially the tourist trade; shelters have implemented widespread regulations and sanctions.

As more and more people living in the streets are arrested for violating local panhandling or camping ordinances or

*See* **Root Causes of Homelessness** *page 15*

# The Root Causes of Homelessness

*from page 14*

harassed into hiding in remote areas of a city, their disappearance from tourist areas and other public spaces creates the illusion that homelessness as a social problem is ending. Harassment, arrest, and incarceration can be used, therefore, to back up city and state policies of removing people who lack shelter from public places when police sweeps fail.

This points to a disturbing trend of using prisons and shelters as the housing of last resort for the very poor, but specifically poor people of color.

With 1.63 million people incarcerated throughout the United States in 1996, a large increase from the 1980s, Western (1999) argues that criminal justice policies have led to "a sizable, non-market reallocation of labor, overshadowing state intervention through social policy."

Incarceration is most frequent for African-American men, who make up 51 percent of the prison population. Headley (Summer, 1990-91) sees the increased incarceration of African-American men, homeless or otherwise, as a consequence of deindustrialization and job relocation by industries seeking to increase capital accumulation by moving to low-wage areas and non-union states.



**A homeless woman in Berkeley finds shelter for the night in a secret place where she won't be disturbed.** Lydia Gans photo

**Harassment, arrest, and incarceration can be used to back up policies of removing people who lack shelter from public places. This points to a disturbing trend of using prisons and shelters as the housing of last resort for the very poor, especially poor people of color.**

### THE CAUSES OF HOMELESSNESS

Developing solutions to shelter people depends upon our understanding of the causes of homelessness. Historically, discussion about the causes and effects of, and solutions to, homelessness has revolved around the differences between individual causes, normally attributed to deficits in individual character or ability, and social-structural causes, attributed to the lack of human services, affordable housing, and adequate income.

A third, more productive route is to examine the interactions between individual "causes" and social-structural causes, and how those interactions fit within wider political-economic struggles for capital accumulation and racial privilege.

The struggle to understand homelessness as more than an individual deficit or a lack of housing involves understanding the context of social, economic, and political power within which homelessness emerges. Therefore we must distinguish between proximate and ultimate causes.

### THE CONSERVATIVE EXPLANATION: PERSONAL DEFECTS ARE TO BLAME

Koegel, Burnam, and Baumohl (1996) marked one set of explanatory "causes," those defined by a personal limitation — what we could define as proximate causes. Mental illness, substance abuse, inability to sustain relationships, and other individual factors make up this "cause" in explaining homelessness. While conservatives use a religious/moral framework to invite homeless people to repent of their sins, a liberal perspective built on these "causes" treats homeless people as victims in need of treatment, and therefore works to promote better rehabilitation programs and community care networks. (Koegel, Burnam, and Baumohl, 1996).

Reducing the causes of homelessness to individual behavior or visible characteristics allows conservatives to claim that people without shelter choose to live on the streets because they lack the motivation and will to compete successfully, and thus end up at the bottom of the social ladder. Quick to distinguish between housed and homeless persons, conservatives react to homeless people as crazy, free-loading, or troubled and dangerous characters needing police action to contain their movements (Barak, 1992). Such a traditional position is most closely related to the social perceptions of the "hobo," "tramp," or "bum" that accompanied the Depression Era of the 1930s.

### LIBERALS ADOPT A MEDICAL MODEL

The "liberal" position views the personal defects of homeless people as treatable — more a disease than a moral or personal failing. Adopting a "medical" model, those who embrace this position are motivated by assisting individual homeless people. This charity model typically is embraced by shelter and service providers. The expansion of shelter services and other medical services are thought to provide the solution to homelessness — getting individual people back on their feet. "Lack of proper services, that is, caused the problem, and only more and better services will solve it." (Wright, Rubin, and Devine, 1998.)

While the first position sees the problem as one of moral choice, the second position sees it as a treatable disease. In the second explanation, political-economic causes are supplanted by individualized "languages of disability" (Snow, Anderson, and Koegel, 1994) oriented toward client treatment, and a "politics of compassion" (Hoch and Slayton, 1989) that promotes charity and the gift relationship. Adherence to the standards of the gift relationship can then be used to mark those people without shelter who are "deserving" (women with children) from those who are "undeserving" (single adult males).

For the first, conservative position, punitive solutions are necessary to shape moral behavior and discourage "bad" behavior. For the second, liberal position, compassionate solutions are important because people can end up homeless through no fault of their own, but rather through the progression of an addiction.

Wright, Rubin, and Devine call these two theories "homeless by choice" versus "inadequate services." Both of these positions, embraced by Baum and Burnes (1993), are refuted by Wright, Rubin, and Devine because they ignore the role of social-structural factors.

### THE DEEPER ECONOMIC CAUSES

These factors — the creation of increased poverty concentrated in inner-city areas, the loss of housing and jobs, and the abandonment of the social safety net — suggest that "defects and dislocations of social structure… create a population at risk of homelessness; defects of persons determine who within the at-risk population actually becomes homeless" (Wright, Rubin, and Devine, 1998).

A causal model of analysis that focuses on personal defects, therefore, misleads us into pursuing the wrong solutions. "Analyses that focus on personal deficits of the homeless mistake the characteristics of people who are homeless for the causes of the homeless" (Wright, Rubin, and Devine, 1998). This confusion creates problems in so far as the application of treatments or "solutions" designed to correct or help personal defects fail because the basic issues of structural poverty, housing, and income are not addressed.

The overemphasis on treatment for mental illness or substance abuse does not consider the heterogeneous nature of the homeless population — the fact that while rates of mental illness and substance abuse appear higher in this population than in the housed population, it does not follow that treatment is all that is required to take people off the street.

Academic researchers, foundations, and advocates for the homeless encouraged the fragmentation of the very poor as a constituency into separate categories defined by special needs (homeless teenagers, homeless families, homeless veterans, homeless HIV-positive drug users, and the like). This individuation of "deserving" people (Hopper and Baumohl, 1994; Katz, 1989) without homes, who were understood as having a variety of social and personal deficits, was supported by an institutional funding agenda. This agenda emerged from the medical field and was supported by the National Institute of Mental Health.

As Blasi pointed out in a search of the literature, of 354 articles on homelessness, two-thirds appeared in journals devoted to psychiatry, psychology, and medicine, with five percent in journals on political economy, economics, or housing (1994). "American social science is embedded in a broader culture in which virtually all social philosophies — particularly those related to poverty — are seen as reflecting personal characteristics, personal choice, and personal failings" (Blasi, 1994).

### STRUCTURAL ECONOMIC CAUSES

The second explanation is that "homelessness was caused by structural forces" (Koegel, Burnam, and Baumohl, 1996), usually defined as a lack of low-cost housing or lack of income. Wright, Rubin, and Devine, refusing the individual causal model of personal defects, assert that homelessness is a result of a wide "variety of complex social system dislocations" that render large numbers of people at risk of losing their shelter (1988). The three social-structural "causes" most often quot-

*See* **Root Causes of Homelessness** *page 16*

**"That people could come into the world in a place they could not at first even name and had never known before; and that out of a nameless and unknown place they could grow and move around in it until its name they knew and called with love, and call it HOME, and put roots there and love others there; so that whenever they left this place they would sing homesick songs about it and write poems of yearning for it, like a lover...."**

**— William Goyen, *House of Breath***

# The Root Causes of Homelessness

*from page 15*

ed as contributing to a loss of shelter are inadequate income, declining welfare services, and loss of housing.

### INCREASING INCOME INEQUALITY

For over two decades, the United States has experienced a growing population in poverty, a deepening of poverty, an increase in the duration of episodes of poverty, and increased spatial and social isolation of the poor (Wright, Rubin, and Devine, 1998). Contrary to what one might expect in a growing economy, the overall poverty rate — 13.3 percent in 1998 — has concealed the extent to which the number of those living in poverty has increased from 29.2 million in 1980 to 36.5 million in 1996, an increase of 7.3 percent.

In addition, the bottom fifth of the population, which commanded 5.4 percent of the total national income in 1970, has experienced a decline in income to 4.2 percent of the total national income in 1996. The upper fifth, by contrast, experienced a massive increase in their share of the total national income.

This increasing impoverishment of the bottom fifth conceals the degree to which those in extreme poverty, those making less than 50 percent of the poverty wage, have experienced even more dramatic declines in fortunes. The economic vulnerability produced by these declining incomes increases the risk of homelessness. Using various time measurements and calculations of poverty rates, Devine and Wright (1993) concluded that indeed the bottom fifth of the United States population has experienced longer and longer episodes of poverty corresponding to the declining shares of national income.

The increasing spatial and social isolation of the poor reveals that the vast majority reside in inner-city areas, isolated from job markets and subjected to higher crime rates and substance abuse patterns in their neighborhoods. These communities consist predominantly of people of color, a feature that also characterizes most homeless individuals in urban areas.

### REDUCED GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

What has produced this drop in income and the expansion of the poor population at risk of losing shelter? The end of welfare, trumpeted as a way of taking the poor off federal dependency, is improving the lives of some of the poor while increasing the impoverishment of others.

Before the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act was passed, support levels of the prior program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), were steadily declining around the country relative to the increasing consumer price index. Not surprisingly, therefore, poor families with children have made up an increasing portion of those without shelter.

Although the average earnings and overall incomes of low-income, female-headed families with children increased between 1993 and 1995, with an expansion of the economy, the incomes of the poorest 20 percent of these (two million families, six million people) fell an average of $580 per family from 1995 to 1997, as welfare reform took hold. These families have incomes below three-quarters of the poverty line.

Cutbacks in government cash and food assistance can explain this decline. Between 1995 and 1997, the number of people living in poverty declined only 3 percent while those receiving food stamps declined 17 percent. In 1995, some 88 percent of poor children received food stamps; in 1998, only 70 percent received food stamps. From 1995 to 1997, the number of people on AFDC and then TANF (Temporary Aid to Needy Families) declined by 3 million or 22.2 percent. Had the safety net programs been as effective in 1997 as in 1995, there would have been 700,000 fewer poor children. Reductions in benefits thus exceeded new family earnings (Primus, Rawlings, Larin, and Porter, 1999).



**A homeless man surveys his worldly belongings shortly before this Albany encampment was raided by police.** Lydia Gans photo

While some welfare mothers did find jobs and moved off welfare, others have languished, trapped in low-paying jobs with few benefits, and still others are waiting for any type of job. It is most probable that while such families may barely hold on during this time of economic expansion, given the inevitable recession we can expect these families to flood the ranks of the homeless.

While it is true that some people are pulling out of poverty as a result of economic expansion and the elevation of the minimum wage, many are working longer hours at lower-paying jobs just to stay in place. Given an economic downtown, these segments of the working poor will join the extreme poor in increasing rates of homelessness.

The result of welfare reform among poor families is mixed. For some, the reform has temporarily lowered the risk of homelessness. For many others, remaining in poverty with few benefits puts them at risk for an episode of homelessness.

### DECREASING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

In addition to declining incomes and reduced government support, the picture of low-income housing looks quite bleak, at least in the short term. As the pool of national and global poor populations expands, the availability of low-income housing is simultaneously shrinking, creating an "affordability gap" (Shine and Gillespie, 1994; Dolbeare, 1996). For example, the number of poor renters in the United States making less than $10,000 increased from 7.3 million in 1970 to 9.6 million in 1989. The number of affordable housing units declined by 14 percent during the same time period, to 5.5 million housing units, generating a shortfall of 4.1 million units (Timmer, Eitzen, and Talley 1994).

According to a recent U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development study, *The Widening Gap*, 372,000 affordable units available to those at 30 percent of the area median income were lost between 1991 and 1997 alone.

Rents are increasing at twice the rate of general inflation. In 1998, rents increased 3.4 percent while the CPI increased a mere 1.7 percent. Between 1995 and 1997, the number of Americans making less than 30 percent of the area median income increased 3.1 percent, expanding from 8.61 million to 8.87 million. This is one out of four households.

As indicated above, the growth of the bottom 20 percent of income groupings, and the poor population as a whole, accelerated in the 1990s, as has the decline of low-income housing units relative to the need. Too many poor people are chasing too few units. Unless incomes are raised sufficiently and rents are lowered, or both, this gap between incomes and housing availability is expected to grow into the next millennium.

Housing discrimination continues to mark the housing choices for both poor and middle-income African Americans. In a tight housing market, such discrimination guarantees that African Americans will have few positive choices and a disadvantage in competing for what limited affordable housing is available. African Americans as a group are still locked in segregated neighborhoods in urban areas, and increasingly in suburban areas, even while some cities and suburbs have managed to overcome these barriers to integration (Massey and Denton, 1988, 1993).

Besides the escalating cost of housing and the declining incomes of the poor, low-income housing, such as single-room occupancy hotels (SROs), has declined rapidly through urban gentrification and condominium conversions that favor upper-income homebuyers. Homeless shelters have come to replace the housing associated with the Skid Rows of the past.

Federal attempts to grapple with this decline in affordable housing have been weak and inadequate. While it is true that budget allocations have increased to cover Section 8 housing vouchers, Stewart B. McKinney funds, and various other housing programs targeted at the poor, the rates of increase have declined and the growth of the problem has expanded far faster than government planning can accommodate. The problem stems from both the decision by the federal government to remove itself from constructing and financing new housing for the poor, and a wholesale abandonment to the private market to provide needed housing.

Unfortunately, most explanations of homelessness in the literature have fallen between these twin poles of personal deficits and social-structural causes. The opposition between these two explanations is a false one. In fact, as Koegel, Burnam, and Baumohl point out, "lives of all people, homeless or not, are embedded in circumstances shaped as much by structural factors as personal and biographical ones" (1996).

Both the personal defect and social-structural models fall short because they remain detached from a critical analysis that could explain why those conditions have emerged in the first place. They don't ask the deeper questions: Why has income dropped for the very poor relative to other income classes? And why have government benefits been reduced and affordable housing lost relative to need for the past 20 years?

### CAPITALISM FOR THE ELITES

An answer requires a causal explanation that understands loss of housing, income, and welfare services as effects of a more profound restructuring of capitalism induced by political elites working for their self-interest within a market economy — a restructuring that allocates greater benefits to the wealthy than to the poor, working, and middle classes.

If workers are rendered vulnerable because of downsizing, and then start drinking, have family problems, and end up on the street, is it the problem of the worker or the problem of why the downsizing occurred in the first place? Who benefits from and who pays for this arrangement of social power? And how are these benefits and liabilities manifested?

### THE ULTIMATE POLITICAL CAUSES

Individual and social-structural causes as explanations for the expansion of homelessness can be subsumed under political-economic explanations, which incorporate a historical perspective, the role of culture and ideology, and the role of markets in capital accumulation.

Barak (1992) explains that "homelessness as characteristic of the new poverty that emerged in the 1980s is a product of the transition from an industrial-based capitalist economy to a postindustrial capitalist service economy within the context of internationally developing global relations."

The decline in average real wages, the reduction in health care, and the inability to secure adequate housing are part of a "national crisis of profitability and productivity" that emerged in the 1970s (Barak, 1992). U.S. corporate capitalists responded to this crisis in capital accumulation with extensive layoffs of blue-collar workers in the 1980s and white-collar

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# The Root Causes of Homelessness

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workers in the 1990s, accompanied by outsourcing, technological innovation in communications and computers, and overseas expansion (Blau, 1992).

With wages driven down, families had to work harder and longer to stay ahead, increasing family stress and fraying fragile social networks.

Other countries, such as Japan and Germany, with more advanced levels of political struggles and higher social wages, resisted the "American model." They have attempted to regain their margins of profitability and productivity by innovating technologically, expanding markets, subsidizing industry and education, retaining skilled workers, and importing immigrant workers, even while carrying on a limited privatization of state assets. However, even for these countries the American model has beckoned as their financial situations deteriorated and as elites have moved toward a market model of allocative efficiency.

Historically, in the tradition of Keynesian liberal politics, government spending in the United States was understood as the most efficient vehicle for correcting social ills produced by the market. Raising money for needed social programs through increased taxes and expanding social services was an important part of this vision of creating civility.

Federal enforcement of anti-segregation laws, combined with the Civil Rights Movement, was essential in ending legal racial segregation. In California, the struggle of the United Farmworkers Union to create decent working conditions for farmworkers would not have been successful without the establishment of the state Agricultural Relations Board to enforce the new policies. Social movements for justice went hand in hand with an increased government commitment to helping the poor and to curbing racist and sexist policies.

However, with the stagnation of the 1970s economy, the conservative backlash against the movements of the 1960s, and the questioning of democracy by national elites, concern about ending poverty shifted to concern about lowering deficits and ending stagflation.




**When workers fall prey to downsizing, and then are left jobless and develop family or alcohol problems, and end up on the street, is it the fault of the worker or the fault of the corporations that engage in downsizing?** Lydia Gans photo

### SOCIAL CONSERVATISM, WELFARE CUTS AND PRIVATIZATION

The solution adopted by policy elites was to embrace neoliberal market ideologies favoring supply-side economics, deficit reduction, privatization, and social conservatism. Public attitudes sympathetic to reduced government spending and rationalizations for those reductions by political elites moved beyond the marginal right-wing political groups of the 1970s into mass acceptance in the 1990s, partly because of the attractiveness of these simplistic antistatist allegories (Block, 1996).

Liberal government's attempts to help the poor, not poverty itself, were now redefined as the problem. This effectively rationalized the cutbacks in welfare payments as "tough love." By assuming that the market could do a better job of providing housing and with the desire to reduce government budgets, new federal housing construction was the natural victim for federal budget cutters.

The dominant cultural ideology now shared by both major political parties in the United States relies upon the assumptions that spending on social welfare increases dependency and that "excessive" government intervention in markets and state regulation makes it difficult for businesses to stay competitive in a global marketplace. This ideology, strengthened by the "no new taxes" rebellion of the 1980s, undercut attempts to use government for social good.

The "no new taxes" rebellion started in California with the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978 (Schrag, 1999), and spread to other states in the 1980s. Coupled with the twin ideological concepts of deficit reduction and privatization of public services, the reduction of government services increased the misery of the poor while advancing the economy for the benefit of upper-middle-class professionals and wealthy investors. According to Block (1996), attempts to reform the market by countering investor ideology could be neutralized effectively by the reactions of bond traders.

### DOWN SIDE OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM

Integrated global financial markets, high rates of social inequality and incarceration, and the violence of poverty directed into nationalist ambitions, racist and sexist attacks, and anti-immigrant fervors appear to define the negative side of this neo-Gilded Age. The globalization of financial markets, the ease of capital movements, and endless currency speculation have produced widespread pleasure for the few at the expense of the many, the disintegration of local controls, and a fragmentation of civil society (Bauman, 1998).

The limitations of the individual and social-structural explanations are apparent. Deepening poverty and homelessness, decreasing amounts of low-income housing, and a failing health policy are the surface effects of a deeper cause: the success of the neoliberal market model of capitalism in transferring wealth and power to an expanded and consolidated global and national elite at the expense of the majority of U.S. citizens (Blau, 1999).

I don't want to give the impression that individual factors are not important, only that they constitute "nested" causes within social-structural causes, which are in turn nested within political-economic causes.

Following this argument, it makes sense to support service providers and increased funding for detox centers and mental health treatment, while also supporting better-paying jobs, more low-cost housing, and comprehensive health care. But this support is best served within a broader struggle for human rights and economic democracy that tackles the deepening social inequality, globally and nationally, that can put individuals at risk.

At the level of appearance, homelessness is about poverty and ill health. However, these conditions are created by the normal capitalist production of low-wage jobs and high housing costs, coupled with a reduction in welfare benefits from states attempting to compete with one another over the price of labor and the costs of benefits.

In addition, such capital strategies have always depended upon differences in racial/ethnic and gender privilege to operate for the advantage of the privileged. Social conditions have worsened since the 1970s as the class compromise between labor and capital has dissolved and been replaced by neoliberal ideologies that subject all international and national policies to the criteria of market "efficiency."

### THE 'HOLLOWED-OUT STATE'

Globally, the neoliberal model depends on the strengthening of international bodies that will foster free trade as well as trade agreements that allow for the free circulation of capital and commodities. Nationally, neoliberalism depends on the "hollowed-out state" (Jessop, 1994; Hirsch, 1991) where budget deficits are reined in through privatization, deregulation, and social wage cutbacks.

According to Devine (see Barak, 1992), economic development under neoliberalist policies lowers elite interest in helping the poor. Cities are invested with "entrepreneurial" functions acting as an independent player in private-public partnerships (Mayer, 1994; Wright, 1997). These policy shifts have increased the vulnerability of the poor, with the abolishment of the safety net, medicalization and criminalization of the homeless, and the shifting of funds from the civil welfare state to the corporate welfare state.

Citizen rights and capital responsibility via progressive taxation and an expanded social wage have been reversed to capital rights and citizen responsibility via regressive taxation and a shrinking social wage. Hence, we have both increased numbers of people without shelter combined with a reduced commitment to solving the root causes.

The spread of neoliberal "free" market models is already under attack from both conservatives (Gray, 1998) and progressives (Sassen, 1998; Bauman, 1998; Bourdieu, 1998; Peck and Tickell, 1994; Teeple, 1995) who understand the manner in which economic chaos leads to political authoritarianism and the overall decline of capitalism. Even as these ideologies come under attack, they continue to spread through European welfare states, threatening to generate new levels of homelessness.

*Next month: Where are the solutions?*

**Homelessness and the Poverty of Responses**
**San Francisco State University, HSS 248**
**Spring, 2000, Thursday evenings, 6:00—8:45 p.m.**

**Instructor: Dr. Talmadge Wright and S.F. Homeless Advocates**
**Political Science 475, 4 units**

**Join Professor Talmadge Wright in this important course that explores the nature and causes of homelessness in San Francisco. This political science course examines the policies of exclusionary real-estate development, gentrification and escalating rents, as well as the lack of low-income housing, the steady decline of worker wages, and the move to dismantle the social safety net. The course will bring in key homeless advocates, policy makers and academics to examine the problems of housing, jobs and health care for the very poor, shelter institutionalization as a strategy of social control, the criminalization of homeless people, gentrification and social exclusion, homeless social movements, squatting and collective protests, and public policy implications. In particular, the course will look at how people without shelter have resisted city efforts to contain their movements.**

**Dr. Wright is the author of *Out of Place: Homeless Mobilizatinos, Subcities, and Contested Landscapes*, 1997 SUNY Press. For more information on this course, call Dr. Wright at his office: (415) 338-6954.**

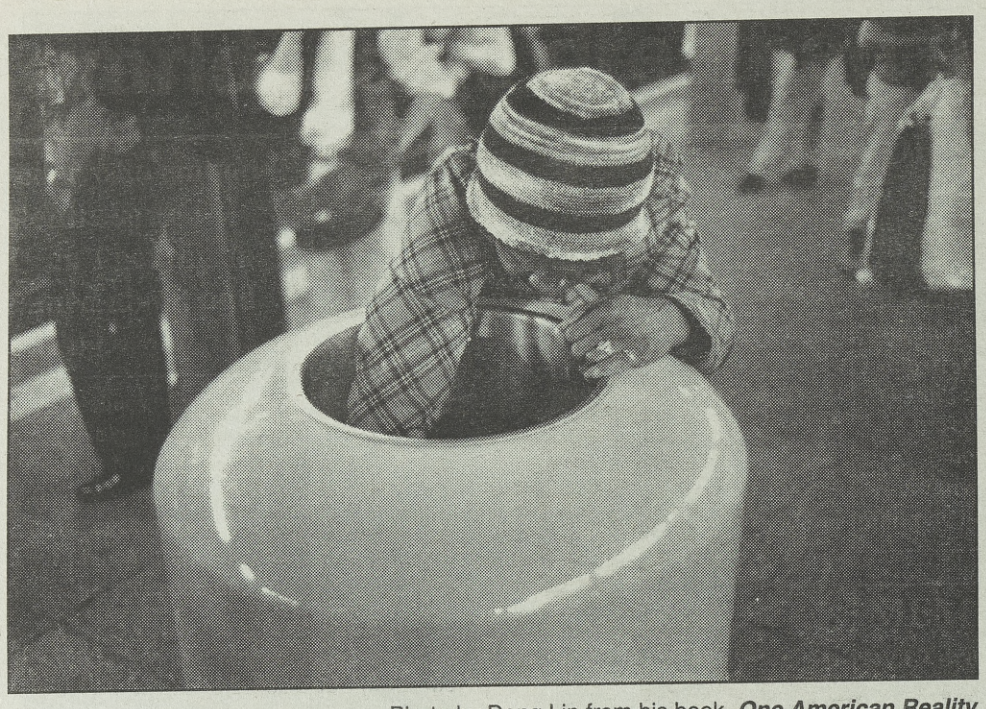


Photo by Dong Lin from his book, ***One American Reality***

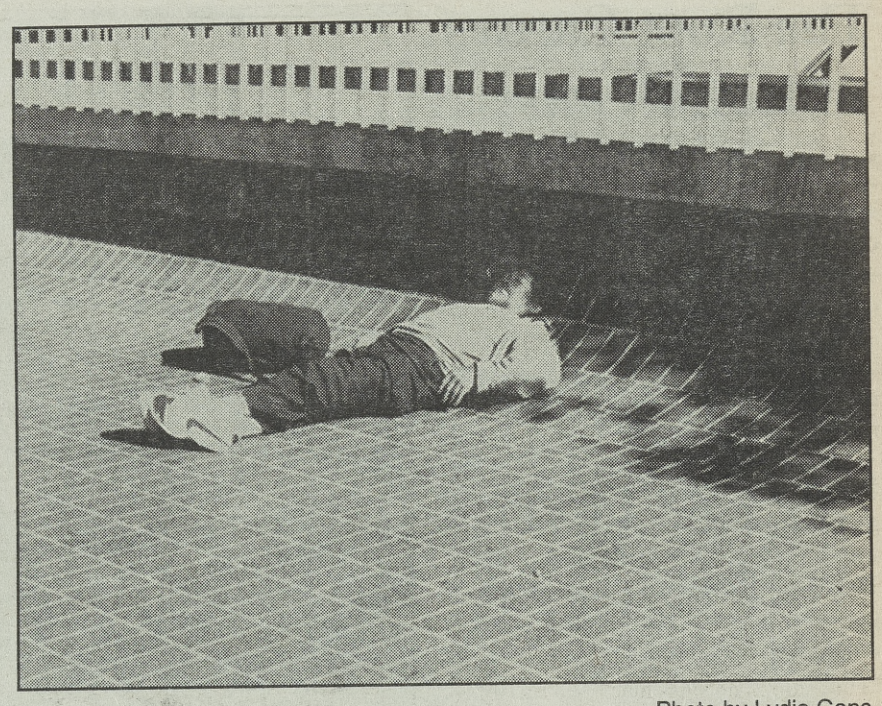


Photo by Lydia Gans

## 21st CENTURY

**by Julia Vinograd**

The 21st century, Time turns 21
and can legally buy a drink.
He'll go laughing off with his buddies
to a bar where a wooden penny-in-the-slot gypsy
pours a shot of night into our empty skulls
which Time grabs with both hands
and chug-a-lugs down.
Time's buddies are made of smoke and mirrors
but that's what you find in a bar.
They're betting whether Time can drink up the night,
all the cold bottles of dark night
with its muggers and lovers before the rising sun,
and if he does will it ever be night again?
Not that it matters if they win their bets.
Time's coming of age and getting drunk.
He'd been borrowing gravestones for fake IDs,
now he grinds stone wreaths and marble angels
under his heel and never looks back.
The jukebox plays everything from hot watches
*to cuckoo clocks to church bells,*
Time doesn't listen.
He'll never turn 21 again, he has to make it last.
And tomorrow Time has a hangover,
puking all over our dreams.
A horrible hangover, far worse than the end of the world.

## I'm Blasting Out Of Here

**by Michael Creedon**

I'm blasting out of here
With my God-given spirit
To a new place
Where everything isn't gray.
I'm blasting out to a place
Where people that don't have anywhere to live
And make a little home in,
Which is one of our most basic rights as human beings,
Which don't forget we are,
Get to be at least sheltered with love, respect
And enough spare change to make it through the day,
Even to have a little luxury once in a while,
A cigarette if you smoke,
Or someone gives you a hot fresh pack of
McDonald's onion rings which you love
It's hard times we eat what we get.
I'm blasting out of my little one-horse-junction in Oakland
To be with you on the streets, with money in my pockets
So I can give you more.
And I'm blasting out so I can pay my rent
And still not have money just money for minimal food
But some money for a night out on the town.

What would that be?
I would see all then.
I would step out with a friend for a coffee, a movie,
A dinner, *on me*, with you,
If I get this job.
Then I could give you more spare change than before,
When I was one of you, but you didn't know it.
I had a place to live,
But in my heart I was still one of you, even though I know
It's not the same thing.
Accept me now, and join me, while I
Blast out of here.
It's good for you too.

## *Genesis 6:17*

**by Robert Stevens**

Existence is the river
in whose flow you and I float and
paddle like hell
over ledge and ledge and
steep drowning ledge: swirling, plummeting,
lolling, then dropping from one conclusion
to another conclusion: from an end to an end,
and a finish to a finish: childhood, adolescence, love,
work and war — slashing our way through
to the next fall.

Rush through life to fall to flounder to cry to
thrash and beat the waters white and foamy
to paddle like a son-of-a-bitch to an end
that may hurt or destroy us both, and we
hardly give a rat's ass about a landlocked tranquility
or any thing that sends down deep roots.

We paddle like hell toward a true finality, an end
where the river meets the ocean, knowing
that the waters will still flow and rage, racing
to the end, and yes, it does finally end, and
yes, there is peace somewhere and within a certain time,
but for now, and for as long as creation draws another breath
there is still the water — we never seem to
run out of all this: we
never run out of
all this
fucking
water.

## The Starvers & the Shoppers

**by Michael Creedon**

People on the street
Need something to eat,
Not just McDonald's refuse.
Why should they beg for their food
When there's so much unused?
It's an unChristian shame in a Christian society
When you consider the results.

Too many people die from the side-effects
Of slow starvation, put down to other causes.
Drugs and defeat burn in the street
Where malnutrition purges too many bodies.
I walk down Shattuck Avenue
And I can see the starvation among the faces,
And this is a street of affluent stores.
The starvers walk among the shoppers.
It's Christmas Season, a time of great joy
For so many. But there's nothing
To have joy about for the other many.
Joy comes from within
But that fire requires fuel —
Food. They are starving
Here, among us. It all adds up.
I am not that far away
From vitamin deficiency,
Liver dysfunction, kidney
Failure.

I want a world where everybody
Gets enough to eat, good food,
Not bad food. But any food is better than
Nothing.

## VISIONARY

**by Claire J. Baker**

Do we intend to rise
to the breathtaking height
of the vision in our eyes?
Do we feel a lift
of compassion in our feet?
Look, a rainbow connecting
us all, our shoulders
lovely in pastel.

## Waiting For Spring

**by Robert Stevens**

The dreams of winter are
knives suspended
from rotten mop threads,
the days are sunrises,

and numbers on the calendar -- one
passes, and the time
elapses
until the next one. The streets

of winter are orphans,
bastards, rain and snails,
creeping people, and the lost
wandering derelict dogs.

Winter women are deep wounds
unbandaged real slow,
lying in bed with beautiful dented scars.
Winter is the realm of

the damned.

## *Oakland Blues*

**by Michael Creedon**

I'm going to Brownsville,
I can't stand these Oakland blues.
Too many people on the streets,
Too many drugs I can use.
I'm going to Yuba City,
Got to lose these Oakland blues.

I been here seven years
In the same apartment with no windows.
Only thing it has is a skylight
And a loft.
But seven years is the longest
I've ever lived in one place
And it's the big city.
I'm going to Marysville,
Got to lose these Oakland blues.

Too many people on the street
Here, ain't got nothing to eat.
I can't feed them, and with the prices
Here, I can't feed myself.
I run out of money at the middle
Of every month. Then
It's rice and potatoes time.
Nothing wrong with that
But it gets old
After a while.
Going to Yuba City,
Going to lose these Oakland blues.

# Women's Strike 2000

*from page 10*

the children and do the housework, but this is not valued. We are the main producers and keepers of life and culture in the rural areas, and our economic and social contribution is ignored."

In addition to a radio program, the Center for the Empowerment of Workers in the Home runs a job agency, a meal program for children of domestic workers and a legal advice clinic. They can be reached at Apartado Postal 4389, Lima 100, Peru; Ph/fax: 424-7407.

Mothers from Ghana and Kenya, now living in England, are striking. In their native countries men treat them like slaves. In Europe they are experiencing racism in employment, housing, education, welfare and childcare. They're striking to stop male supremacy and racism.

Actions are also taking place in Australia, Burkina Faso, England, Cameroon, Canada, the United States, Chile, Kurdistan, Mexico, Netherlands, Puerto Rico, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan and Wales.

### BILL BILLY FOR UNWAGED WORK

In the United States, the Welfare Warriors have joined this Global Women's Strike and are committed to making the new millennium the Mothers' Millennium. Since Bill Clinton signed the welfare deform bill into law in August, 1996, all states have been requiring that single mothers abandon post-secondary education, leave infants with strangers, and take any and every part-time, temporary and low-paid job within 20 miles of their homes. This war on the poor is destroying poor families, endangering poor children, and exhausting single motherworkers. It ignores the value and necessity of the unwaged labor performed by single mothers.

Welfare Warriors have created two "Bills for Billy" for unwaged workers to complete to calculate how much money the government owes them for their unpaid labor. Write and ask for either the long or short form — or both. On March 8, they will officially announce this campaign with a press conference. Then on April 15, 2000, they will submit the forms to Clinton to demand that his administration recognize and value unwaged workers, including unwaged work in the budget.




***BREAD!*** **Lithograph by Kaethe Kollwitz.**

### SOHO ON STRIKE

The International Wages Due Lesbians is helping to co-ordinate the Global Women's Strike. This is a multi-racial grassroots network based in London, Barcelona, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Manchester, England. They are demanding recognition and compensation for unwaged and low-waged work. Lesbians contribute to the economy of countries and fight against all forms of homophobia. They're also striking for the right to adopt and raise children and against government attacks on single mothers.

The International Prostitutes Collective is joining the global strike to demand money for the first job they do — housework and motherwork. In this way they can have a real choice to refuse exploitative working conditions and get out of prostitution if they want to. They also want sex work acknowledged as an economic contribution to society. It has been essential to the survival of entire communities and even countries. Prostitutes in Soho, London, are stopping work on March 8, hanging a banner outside their working flats saying "Soho on Strike!"

Students are joining the Women's Strike because they are forced to work to pay tuition while attending school. Student mothers are especially overworked because in addition to schoolwork they must do the unwaged work of mothers everywhere. Students feel that their education will benefit the industry and economy of the state, so the least the state can do is support them.

### CALL TO BROTHERS FOR SUPPORT

Men are also supporting the strike. They are noticing the hard work their mothers, wives, sisters and girlfriends are doing for low wages and no wages. An Italian immigrant living in England is helping by translating strike material into Italian. A computer trainer in England was told when he asked for a raise that a woman would be ready to do his job for 65% less. This man is taking off work on March 8 and babysitting his friend's children. Men are urged to send money to support the strike and to give rides to women to get to the strike activities and to do more housework, child care and cooking.

As long as women work too much for too little, our pay and conditions are the standard for all workers. Most of the unwaged labor worldwide is performed by motherworkers who not only care for the children, but also care for the sick, disabled, injured, dying and the neighborhoods, schools, churches and the Earth. Doing most of this work for no wages leaves most mothers overworked, exhausted and economically poor. Despite performing an overload of the Earth's most important work, motherworkers are disrespected and sometimes even despised as in the case of U.S. moms on welfare.

As long as the largest industry in every country is the unwaged work, the majority of workers will remain poor unless one is young enough, healthy enough, and unencumbered enough to work at least two jobs. Mothers are overworked and need a reduction in workload: less work, more time and fair wages. Join the Global Women's Strike in whatever way you can.

Strike leaflets are available in Basque, French, Punjabi, Spanish, Arabic, Bengali, Catalan, Chinese, Finnish, Gaelic, German, Gujerati, Swedish, Urdu, Tigrynya, Italian, Persian, and Portuguese. Be sure to send an SASE and a check to cover postage.

Visit the strike web site at womenstrike8m.server101.com or contact International Wages for Housework Campaign: PO Box 287, London NW65QU; or PO Box 11795, Philadelphia, PA, 19101; 1-215-848-1120; or PO Box 86681, Los Angeles CA 90086; Margaretta D'Arrcy in Ireland: 10 St., Bridget's Place Lower, Galway, 011-353-91-565-430, e-mail: Margaretta@tinet.ie. For a copy of the Welfare Warriors bill for Billy, write to 2711 W. Michigan, Milwaukee, Wl 53208; or go to the website: execpc.com/~wmvoice.

# S.F. Food Not Bombs

*from page six*

15 arrests a crackdown. "There was no specific focus — [the arrests] were just another encounter," said Ackerson. Food Not Bombs, the officer contended, is the "confrontational" party in this dispute for not serving in a more discreet location.

ROV also grilled Captain Sue Manheimer, the commanding officer for the Tenderloin Task Force. The task force is based in the old Hibernia Bank building at McAllister and Jones, and Manheimer keeps a sword on display behind her desk. When asked who ordered the crackdown, Manheimer told us the operation "was strictly under my direction."

When asked why the city's reign of terror against the gratis-grub activists took a four-year hiatus, Manheimer said she didn't know. The most recent wave of arrests, said the officer, had ceased "for the time being because the task force has run out of budget money, but we expect to get more in February and want to do more enforcement then."

"If FNB would work within the legal parameters like the other programs, I would be more than happy to support them," Manheimer told us. "FNB needs to stop sustaining homelessness with their feedings and come up with a more holistic way to solve the problem of homelessness."

On Thanksgiving day, an ROV reporter visited UN Plaza. Her mission: talk to the people who eat the soup ladled out by Food Not Bombs.

It was about 5:30 p.m., and Eva was the only woman sitting there. She looked rather young, possibly around 30. Her long blond hair touched the collar of her neatly pressed blue suit. She was perfectly made-up. "I live in a homeless shelter for women," she said. "I'm originally from Ohio and I was married and have a five-year-old daughter. I couldn't take care of her so my husband has custody."

Glen is black, probably about sixty, also homeless. He spends most of his day in the public library where he feels safe and secure. He leaves the library only to dine on gratis grub provided by Glide Memorial United Methodist Church or Food Not Bombs.

"I've been homeless about a year," Glen told us. "I used to live in a hotel room in the Mission. Someone started a fire. People burned to death. I'm glad that I'm still alive, but I feel safer on the street. I lost everything I owned."

When the library is closed, Glen said, he wanders the streets and panhandles. "I come here every day to get soup because I don't always like what Glide serves for dinner and I'm still hungry."

Ernesto entered this country illegally and stays out of the public eye. He came here to work, but he gets paid less money than the average person who has immigration documents. Sometimes he works a lot harder for a lot less.

On his way to the United States, Ernesto walked through most of the night to a semi-deserted area, to an unpainted shack to meet the coyote, the man who would transport him across the border. Inside there were ten other would-be immigrants, eager and willing to leave their families and homes to work for the almighty dollar. The coyote had connections. When Ernesto finally arrived at an orange grove he found a backbreaking job picking oranges. He owed the coyote $2000. As he picked fruit, the groves were often sprayed with pesticide. Ernesto acquired asthma and was fired.

Now he has no money and no home. He came up north from Southern California but was too sick to work. He still owed the coyote money. Ernesto said he comes to Civic Center for the soup. He also comes to meet other Mexican men to talk and ease his loneliness.

Another Glen, a working man with a salary, said he could no longer pay his rent. His landlord raised his monthly dues from $625 to $900. So Glen was also homeless and living in his van. He said he enjoyed the soup and was grateful to FNB, "now that I can't keep food or have a refrigerator."

Then there's Ralph and Joe. They met at an A.A. meeting three months ago. They've been tight friends ever since. Ralph had a bible in his hands and both made references to God as they spoke. Each was the other's mentor. Both frequented Civic Center for the soup and commented on its warmth and taste. They had both been sober for six months.

Mark testified about what it felt like when the San Francisco police descended on FNB. "I was fourth in line," he said. "We were a quiet, problem-free group of about forty men, not causing any trouble. My mouth began to water as I smelled the aromatic aromas emanating from the hot pot. Suddenly, out of nowhere, came the San Francisco police and confiscated the soup. They actually took the bread out of our hands. I felt like I was going to cry."

We are still saddled with the long-standing moral and political issue about what to do with the on-again, off-again arrests of Food Not Bombs volunteers by the San Francisco police. And when it came to election time, even Mayor Willie Brown exploited the nonprofit organization during October and November by ordering further arrests at UN Plaza, in order to get re-elected to office.

But the hot issue rages on, since what's at stake remains the ultimate fate of starving homeless residents and FNB's status as the administration's scapegoat.

# San Diego Police Shoot Homeless Man

*from page five*

investigation be taken on why I was battered, why those officers went into a courtroom and falsified information... You have put violence on my record, but you have not corrected the problem. I have been to the courts and they still do not correct the record."

When he was finished, Peace and Freedom Mayoral Candidate Janice Jordan stood up and insisted: "We need to talk about the shootings!"

Another person agreed: "No more statistics; let's talk about the police abuse and the killings!"

When activists demanded that the hearing be opened up to the public, the police officer said: "Let's bring up a gentleman who can talk about the use of force. And talk about your issues, which we're addressing right now. Can we do that? Assistant Chief Mr. John Welter!"

The audience was not placated. "We know the company line; we have problems with the company line!" Another person agreed: "We've heard it before!"

Welter attempted to give his presentation: "I can see there's a lot of concern, and that's why we added this particular section to this forum. I'll give you a chance to speak, but I need to make this presentation. I'll keep this very brief.

"But you're going through the same riff," someone shouted. And Jordan piped up: "We've listened to this! For years! We need an independent, elected police review board! Elected by the people of San Diego!"

Welter persisted: "I think the best way to get with the issues, and to get to the answers, is to give you some information in the beginning. Our department has extensive policies and procedures [uproar from the audience]. In fact they go through thousands of hours of training related just to the use of force. Our officers are asked to go through a "reasonableness" test when they decide to use deadly force."

"A branch?" exclaimed an audience member.

"Explain the DuBose case!" said another. [DuBose was a young black former football player shot last year when police mistook him for a burglar and the misunderstanding escalated.]

"I can't speak about individual cases," said Welter.

"Why not!" "Shooting someone six times is not reasonable!" "Six in the back!" "Unarmed!"

An African-American woman stood and gave her name: "I went to Internal Affairs right down the street! My son was beaten by the police; you didn't do nothing. You changed the report... You beat me and my family. And I only got $22,000 for the beating."

Assistant Chief Welter responded, "One of the things we do, when we train our officers, we look at a 'various force matrix.' We look at what the behaviors are that are presented to the officer."

"A tree branch!" exclaimed an audience member. "He had a stick in his hand, this long. You put five bullets in him!"

"You're trying to tell us they couldn't block a stick!?" asked another.

Rose Goody of *Street Light* stood up. "When our police officers are not trained to defuse a situation, when they walk up to a situation unholstering their gun, they are engaging a fight. People are afraid of cops now."

The CEO took another turn, explaining that officers had come to his home, assaulted him brutally and thrown him down the stairs. He said the department "sent the same two perpetrators back to disrupt the ambulance and falsify reports and coerce the emergency room staff. The Citizen's Review Board needs teeth! We have dedicated officers, who I respect. And we have a system that protects the criminals on the force. We want to do something about it."

Lucky Morales was next, saying: "I'm head of an organization to stop gang violence here in San Diego; it's called Union del Barrio, and we have this Unity Walk that we've been doing every Sunday since November, 1996.

"A couple months ago we had to go before the Mayor of National City and his Police Chief because we'd been verbally harassed by the Police Department of National City, because they wanted to call us wetbacks, and whatever names they could come up with. In that situation it's always a bunch of youngster cops, a bunch of rookies, that don't even know what we're all about.

"I saw the footage of this man being shot, and I saw the aftermath of it. It wasn't necessary. It seems to me that there's more concern over the damned dog. It doesn't make any sense to me.

"This one officer... felt it was in his best interest to tell us that we needed to go back to Mexico. We handed him a flyer . 'I don't want to see your flyer. I don't give a shit what your organization is all about.'

"We're out there promoting peace, and then we see — because I'm an educated Chicano, and I see that police officers who have education will take advantage of those who aren't educated on their civil and Constitutional rights. They manipulate them to contradict themselves into a pair of handcuffs! I see them do it to Chicanos all the time, and to the blacks, and to some of the whites who live in inner-city neighborhoods. This stuff has got to stop! You've got a bunch of cowboys out there patrolling the street!"

Another African-American man identified himself as a school teacher. "I teach in this community. Officer LeMasters and Officer Perez taught my fifth grade class. Part of what they taught was how to control conflict! You have five officers involved in this shooting. Two of them didn't shoot. Why not? "

Welter explained that he couldn't discuss an ongoing investigation. "I can't tell you about any of that; I can tell you anything about Southeastern San Diego."

The school teacher asked, "How do I explain, to my nine and ten year old black males, that your life, any time you get approached by a police officer, is in jeopardy? Do you have to tell your son, 'Any time you get stopped by a police officer, it's best to put your hands on the steering wheel, or you're subject to die?!' Come on, do you have to tell them that!?

"No, I don't tell my sons that," Welter said.

"I'm asking you, Captain, to explain the situation! How can I justify, to a nine or ten year old, that one black man gets shot 11 times, six times in the back, when the weapons used are basically the same size? A [police] club, and a branch! How do I explain that it's okay to kill this black man, and now see this big outcry here because a homeless white guy got killed! I value life no matter what color. How do I explain the difference?"

"You don't," said Welter. "We don't treat people differently because of the color of their skin." (The force may be striving to make this true, the audience responded with considerable vocal disbelief.)

A little while later, the mike was handed to a small, balding man in a clerical collar, the Reverend Glen Allison, Executive Director of the San Diego Ecumenical Council.

Allison said, "I was there on Tuesday. I saw this event going down. I'm a trained professional in mental health. I can tell you that man was seriously mentally disabled. And you didn't have to have a board of psychiatrists to tell you that. The police officers knew it; the citizens standing around knew it. What they did was entirely unnecessary and uncalled for; and it could have been prevented! That's a fact.

**"I was on Midway Drive; I saw what took place.... In my opinion this was a shooting which was not justified. This was an avoidable shooting. If I am correct that this was an avoidable shooting, then we are in the area of ethics. And morality. There was a wrong done."**

— Rev. Glen Allison, executive director of the San Diego Ecumenical Council

"Less than eight blocks away, at Midway and Rosecrans, is a County Mental Health facility where they have a team trained for this kind of situation; they could have talked the man down. Instead they called in the SWAT team. The SWAT team for a man who was mentally disabled and had a little tree branch in his hand!" [The SWAT team did not arrive in time, but was called.]

"The police were at least 40 feet from him when this started," Rev. Allison continued. "They closed in [when the dog arrived] and that's when he got to be somehow regarded as 'endangering their lives.' I would think that a 10-year-old kid who'd had a karate class would have been able to take that man down."

"I want to say to you that what's happening in this town and this county in relation to mental health issues is a scandal. This kind of death is preventable. And we all ought to be preventing it, not just the police. They need to know a lot more than those officers knew, or behaved as if they knew. They drove up in four police cars and stood behind their doors with their guns drawn. This man was 40 feet away. No threat to anybody!

"I'm just telling you that we need to use this occasion to not have it happen again. We need to review the force that we use on people, and use the proper force; what was used on Tuesday was improper. I don't know this man, though I've seen him a hundred times, but I want to make sure that he gets a decent burial.

"As far as I'm concerned, he was a victim, a victim of the police's brutality. What I read in the newspaper this morning is that the Mayor is calling some kind of hearing to review all of this policy. I think that we all ought to turn up at that, and that the policy ought to be changed. And first in line with the new policy, it ought to be the Chief of Police! It ought to be, second in line, you! [He was addressing Assistant Police Chief Welter.]

"You're out here hearing these people. This is a symptom! Not a cause, a symptom, and you need to be addressing it. As far as I'm concerned, this should be the last time. And you, first of all, should be wanting it to be the last time and not again! The whole mental health community ought to rise up, and the homeless ought to rise up with them, and say: 'Stop it! Stop it today. Make this the last one!'"

Welter then held a long discussion on the levels of permissible force that police can use to subdue suspects. Several speakers told him that the San Diego force "should be ashamed" for feeling the need to use lethal violence to stop one man with a three-foot branch.

For the rest of the meeting, people lined up at the mike while the police listened. Ten-year-old Joshua asked: "Can you tell your officers to stop using their weapons as quick as they have been, not to kill people when it's not necessary?"

Then, an older African-American man said: "You shall reap what you sow! I didn't write that! You need to go downtown and see what some of these officers do to these street people. They mistreat them! You know why they do it? Because the street people put up the least resistance. This is wrong. Where is their hearts? They have mothers and fathers; I hope they did. You see, you are not born with this kind of violence. You're taught that kind of violence."

The next day, this meeting was described very unfavorably in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*. In their choice of statements to quote, they entirely overlooked Rev. Allison. Despite his prominence, his authority as a witness, the cogency and passion of his words, the *Union-Tribune's* account neither mentioned his presence nor quoted him.

Although a series of police-community meetings had been planned, San Diego Police Chief David Bejarano canceled the others. I believe this was a mistake. Although this night's meeting was rude and rowdy, with lots of 'witnessing' and comments the police would like to have been spared, it was the closest thing to a police-public dialogue I've seen yet. The thing police hated most, that it was 'uncontrolled,' was precisely what they need to learn to accept, if they are ever to gain the trust of minority populations.

### CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSES SHOOTING

The City Council discussion that Councilmembers Wear and Stevens had requested actually materialized the following Tuesday, February 15, in a far different kind of meeting. Mayor Golding scheduled it as a "workshop," meaning that the public could listen while the council and their panel had a discussion, but could not comment until the end. Although the panel included representatives from organizations critical of the police, the meeting format seemed almost designed to reduce public input.

A good part of the discussion, as is usual with the City Council, was theatre; that is, it was intended for public consumption rather than for the participants. Mayor Golding and councilmembers shamelessly threw gentle pitches for the panelists, particularly police-friendly panelists, to hit over the fence. This discussion was controlled, and the intended message of the day was that the San Diego Police Department was doing just fine, considering the awful people and frightening conditions they had to work with.

At last, the council got down to business, with Chief Bejarano's testimony on the changes he is instituting in response to recent shootings, specifically the wide distribution of (usually) non-lethal weapons, plus training in their use.

"We'll be using our existing budget, and also some grant funding," Bejarano said. "Life is precious; we want to be sure we can move forward as quickly as we can in obtaining the equipment, and also in completing the training."

This sounds good, but not nearly as worthwhile as the training in "communications skills" he also called for.

I have been consistently impressed with the intelligence and good intentions of San Diego police officers; they seem genuinely determined to build a clean, competent department, and yet they have so very much facade to maintain. I fear that by 'communications skills' they may mean 'verbal control techniques.'

Sometimes maintaining control might resolve a situation peacefully, and at other times a peaceful resolution may depend on

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an officer's openness to someone else's communication. That kind of communications skill may be the most important and the hardest for an officer to learn. It seems an even rarer skill in our city government. Hence, these performances.

Councilmember George Stevens had a diagram projected on the screen, depicting Demetrius DuBose's torso and the paths of the bullets that passed through it. [DuBose was a former football player shot to death by the police last year, who mistook him for a burglar.] Many of the wounds, Stevens said, had to have come while DuBose was lying on the ground.

"When is the perceived threat over?" Stevens asked. "In this case, there was no gun; so if he's down on the ground, why would there continue to be a perceived threat, if all he had in his hand was nunchucks?"

A panelist answered: "It's very difficult for me to say in any one particular scenario, 'at this exact moment, the threat is over.' It's really in the mind of the officer, as to whether he or she is still perceiving a threat..."

"This was 12 shots fired, and by all indications the person was down, did not have a weapon," said Stevens.

Mayor Golding intervened: "We're not discussing a particular case here today!"

Stevens, returning to generalities, questioned the panelist further. "I believe what you said to me was that it's up to their discretion."

"That's correct."

Before the council broke for lunch, another panelist asked for a chance to speak; he couldn't return that afternoon. Timothy Winters, Pastor of Bay View Baptist Church and a leader in the black community movement for more police accountability, is also a former San Diego police officer.

"I know both sides of the issue that we're discussing," Winters said. "I have two comments. Our police will function at the level of their training. That's what's happening now. If all that they have is a pistol, then that's what they'll use. If they're trained to use any other means to apprehend a suspect, and it's available, then they'll use that.

"Now the other comment I'll make, is that in view of all the shootings by police, it is offensive to have us believe the report that every one of those shootings was justified. Our police are good. We have the best police force in any city. But they're not that good."

When the meeting resumed, Bill Ferrar, president of the Police Officers' Association, told a scary story about a man he'd found in an apartment suddenly opening fire with a hidden gun. Like other police apologists, he spoke of "those critical moments" when an officer may need to recognize and respond to an unexpected danger; nothing was said about people standing in the open waving sticks.

Ferrar said that after a shooting, any officer involved is immediately taken away and secluded, except for a volunteer companion, and forbidden to discuss the incident until someone from homicide is ready to question him. Ferrar spoke as if such officers faced a real risk of prosecution, hardly likely.

Still, Ferrar said, "Nobody enjoys this; it's the last thing you want to do on the job." Along with the psychological trauma, officers involved in shootings face a credible danger of discipline, loss of superiors' confidence, even dismissal, although the public doesn't normally learn of it, personnel records being confidential. The required confidentiality is a serious bar to public trust in the system.

Jordan Budd, managing attorney for the ACLU in San Diego, had a different perspective on that issue. "The department's internal investigation must remain confidential under State law," Budd said. "What was not addressed is that it's the particular structure of civilian oversight in the city of San Diego that requires that the information remain confidential."

Because San Diego's civilian oversight board relies solely on information generated by the Police Department's Internal Affairs investigation, they have nothing they can legally reveal to the public. The reason, Budd explained, is that "a California statute requires that internal review and discipline of police officers remain confidential, under the 'Police Officers' Bill of Rights.' The structure of the [City's police] review board relates to this because the review board does not have independent investigatory powers — unlike the County review board, the Citizens' Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB), which has independent investigative power and independent subpoena power.

"With respect to any information that is independently developed by the CLERB, that is a matter of public record. That's quite different than in the model we have in the City of San Diego. That's an important modification that I think the public should be aware of as an alternative; it would require a Charter Amendment to accomplish."

Mayor Golding fervently attacked the idea, insisting that "The People" had rejected that alternative in favor of the present system, some years ago. Actually, the proposition that instituted the present system was put forward to undercut a proposition that would have instituted an independent board; both propositions received majority votes but the weaker proposal had more support, certainly more financial support. Budd insisted it was a good time to reopen the issue.

Budd said, "With respect to the lethal force policy itself, in light of the shooting of William Miller: First, it's important to clarify to what degree safety of the surrounding public is considered in the calculus of whether lethal force is appropriate or not. It's fair to say that the public was in greater danger from the police bullets than from Mr. Miller's stick. The dog was shot, and there was an additional stray bullet that wasn't accounted for. This is a grave concern, and I think it's important that policy address surrounding circumstances and the safety of the public generally.

"And also the matter of whether the threat poses a mortal danger. There's obviously a lot of witnesses and further investigation to take place, but from the news reports it was suggested that some of the officers on the scene may have precipitated a confrontation by approaching Mr. Miller with pepper spray and dogs, and I think that in those circumstances, where the status quo can be maintained until more intervention is available, it's in the community's interest to let the situation remain."

Budd wondered if some officers had committed more than their share of shootings. "Almost everyone would agree that the vast majority of our police officers are diligent in the way they execute their jobs, and the way they approach their responsibilities. We are dealing, to the extent that there is a problem, with some particular individuals on the force. Perhaps they're not getting the message that Chief Bejarano and his administration is sending out. He's done a terrific job in his first year here in terms of reaching out to the community and addressing our concerns.

"But I think there's a core of officers who have a problem in this respect. It would be useful for the department to explore an early warning system that would track the number of complaints, incidents or shootings, use of pepper spray or other kinds of non-lethal force, and to identify those officers who are outside the parameters in terms of their use of those sorts of techniques. So there can be some early intervention and training in other kinds of options."

The police spokesperson responded that under a new policy, the review board "is apprised of any problem with officers who have had shootings in the past. We do know there were occasions where officers have been involved in multiple shootings. Some of it was being in the wrong place at the wrong time." But "for the vast majority, it's the first time. We do have that early warning system in place, not only to capture officer-involved shootings, but also complaints.

"We track them for about a year after serious complaints, and obviously we take a close look at the individual as far as possible reassignment, remedial training, discipline. For people who are frequently the subject of complaints, or actually had sustained complaints."

I was truly amazed to hear that complaints were ever 'sustained' in San Diego.

Christian Ramirez, a young Chicano activist studying history and anthropology at San Diego State, was also on the panel.

He said, "We have no control over the police who patrol our communities, who patrol our streets, particularly in Barrio Logan, which is a typically Mexican community. When it's brought up about the Citizen's Review Board, that it's said to be a rubber stamp — unfortunately we have to agree. Because it's closed; there's no way we could actually go in there and talk to, and place our reports.

"There's a very prestigious human rights organization in San Diego, the American Friends Service Committee, that recently released a report on human rights violations by the police department, among other agencies in this city, and not all those cases were cleared up."

Ramirez held up a copy of the AFSC report. "This gives testimony on citizens of this city who have been treated like animals by members of the San Diego Police Department. And on something that has not been touched upon, racial profiling. It is not altogether a coincidence that you are more likely to get shot by San Diego police if you are a Mexican male, or an African-American male. There's no secret about that; and the statistics in the *Union-Tribune* are probably less than the reality.

"So now we have to really clear up the question of accountability. Who has the power over the San Diego Police Department? Not the citizens obviously. It's about time we questioned police brutality, which is a real problem in San Diego. Let's not water it down; it's a problem throughout this country."

Golding interrupted: "Let's stick with this city."

"So we have to address those issues," Ramirez continued. "Now the question of police accountability to our community: We've always said that the only way the police could be accountable was for the community itself to control the police. If the community itself elects a community review board, with the power to hire and fire officers — that's the only way. That's a proposal we've been pushing for ten years, getting nothing but laughs and mockings, and unfortunately the San Diego City Council members have never addressed those concerns.

"In the Logan Heights area, where a young man was choked..."

Golding broke in again, "I think addressing the Police Chief about what you want to do on the ballot is probably not appropriate."

Ramirez responded, "We feel concerned about the practice of police profiling, and the participation of the police department with the Border Patrol..."

"Okay, Border Patrol is not under our jurisdiction!"

"Yes, but the Police Department is. The Police Department is participating with Border Patrol raids in our communities. Recently a young woman was killed by Border Patrol agents. The question is, what are Border Patrol agents doing outside their jurisdiction working with San Diego police? That's a concern because the Border Patrol affects mostly the Mexican-American community."

City Councilmember Juan Vargas said he had spoken with Ramirez and a colleague. "I do have disagreements with them; you can tell that by their comments, which are very hostile toward the police. They would like to see the citizens themselves, and I would like to see a professional police department like we have.

"It's interesting to hear the gentleman describe the community as one group; that's certainly not the case. I would say that more people follow along the lines of my own thinking, that the police are doing a very good job; they are very proud to have a David Bejarano as Chief of Police. So the whole notion that somehow these are racist, rogue cops out there beating up on Latinos is outrageous."

Ramirez objected: "The thing that the council..." but Mayor Golding cut him off. "I'm sorry sir; Mr. Vargas has the floor. We didn't interrupt you, and we're not going to let you do it to Mr. Vargas."

"Yes you did!" came a voice from the audience.

Sharon Wilson, another panelist, agreed with Ramirez that, "There are officers who treat people differently in our city, and those things need to be dealt with. And I believe that under Chief Bejarano those things will be addressed; I think we have a very progressive department. One thing that we have not touched on is the homeless issue and the mental health issue. This is not just a police problem. This is something that I believe my colleague on the right here can speak to."

Golding wanted to give Chief Bejarano an easy pitch first: "Of the arrests that are made by San Diego P.D., how many involve someone under the influence of illegal drugs? When I was on the Board of Supervisors, the figure used to be about 80 percent of people booked into the jails were under the influence, either of alcohol or some type of drug."

"That's a high percentage," he said. "I do know that for 1999, at least a third of all the adults booked into the jail tested positive for methamphetamine; that's just for meth. Probably at least two-thirds are under the influence of alcohol or narcotics."

Wilson had a further comment: "The way that things get reported out to the public is very confusing. I understand that we don't have control over that, but perhaps the way the information is put out to the media could be more factual. Less secrecy. Because I read four different accounts of what occurred, in the *San Diego Union*. I also heard different accounts on NPR and on public radio. Some of the misinformation that goes out creates part of the problem that we're dealing with in people's perception of how they deal with law enforcement."

Councilmember Harry Mathis gave the subject an odd twist. "The media often gets their information from witnesses. So if there's confusion, it's because they're talking to different people who come away with different impressions. Yes, we can put out the facts, but the media is going to kind of blend those in with accounts from witnesses which often leads to the kind of confusion that you're talking about, and that's not a good thing."

Another voice objected: "Confusing them with the truth!"

And then there was Betty Petterson,

*See* **San Diego Police Shooting** *page 22*

## 'Quality of Life' Laws Create Inequality of Life

*from page four*

gram. It's part of one big homeless program to eliminate the presence of poor people in this country."

The citation defense project of the Coalition on Homelessness offers legal representation to people cited for such "crimes" as sleeping in public, sitting on sidewalks, and public urination. In representing more than 7,000 tickets issued by San Francisco police, the Coalition learned that the "great majority of the tickets have been found to be groundless and have been dismissed, indicating that the court does not believe they should even have been written in the first place."

Laura Ware, who serves on the Local Homeless Coordinating Board, said at the rally, "We strongly encourage the City Attorney's office to stop the program of expanded prosecution, and redirect its resources to possible solutions."

Ware served on a civil rights committee that made four proposals for how the City Attorney's office could use its skills and funding in a positive way to alleviate the problems that lead homeless people to sleep in public places, sit on sidewalks, or drink and urinate in public.

First, the committee proposed that the City Attorney help utilize vacant buildings as homeless housing by rewriting tax codes to penalize owners who leave buildings abandoned.

Second, the City Attorney's office should be funded to help homeless people with disabilities qualify for SSI and SSDI — federal benefits that provide almost $700 per month, plus Medicaid — so they don't end up sleeping on the streets.

Third, the committee called for increased public bathrooms and the reopening of toilets in parks so fewer people are forced to use the streets.

Fourth, the City Attorney could identify areas where it is legal to sleep in public, since sleep is an unavoidable need.

The rally culminated with a rambunctious march through San Francisco's gold-domed City Hall, as about 100 chanting protesters gave the anti-homeless members of the Board of Supervisors a taste of their own medicine by handing out official-looking warrants for committing "Inequality of Life Violations."

The defiant protesters entered uninvited into the offices of those supervisors supporting Brown's prosecution plan, and delivered warrants that declared: "You are charged with ongoing civil rights abuses targeted at homeless San Franciscans. Your support of the City Attorney's 'Quality of Life' Infraction Prosecution scheme is the latest in this tide of abuses."

"You may respond to the WARRANT by providing real solutions to homelessness such as low-income housing, living-wage jobs, treatment on demand, health care, and affordable childcare."

As the group delivered a warrant to the stony-faced aides of Mayor Willie Brown, protester Ivy McClelland shouted, "How many housing units could be built with $250,000? I say we shave the gold off City Hall and open up real housing!"

As Anatole France wrote, "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, beg in the streets or steal bread." Ironically though, despite the "majestic equality" of the law, only poor people were issued the 1,661 police citations for illegal camping and sleeping in San Francisco last year.

It seems surpassingly strange that in a city with the calamity of widespread homelessness, it is still perfectly legal for unscrupulous landlords to ratchet up rents to unpayable levels and then evict their tenants, but it is illegal for those evicted to sleep on a patch of ground outdoors.

Those landlords guilty of profiteering on a commodity — housing — that is indispensable to the continuation of human life are responsible for the presence of thousands of homeless people on the streets. The same profit motive that led to wildly inflated rental rates then motivates merchants to demand that homeless people be driven away.

Simply put, the rich sow the wind, and the poor inherit the whirlwind. The rich amass great wealth while the poor amass tens of thousands of fines, bench warrants, eviction notices, and arrests.

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses, San Francisco. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. The City Attorney just hired some vengeful new prosecutors eager to drive them to their knees.

### *WARRANT*

VIOLATION: Inequality of Life Violations
Ongoing Civil Rights abuses targeting homeless people

CITATION DATE: July 14, 1999

**ATTENTION MAYOR WILLIE L. BROWN**

You are being issued a WARRANT for failure to respond to a citation issued on July 14, 1999, by homeless San Franciscans.

You are charged with ongoing civil rights abuses targeted at homeless San Franciscans. Your support of the City Attorney's "Quality of Life" Infraction Prosecution scheme is the latest in this tide of abuses.

This WARRANT has been recognized by the Coalition on Homelessness and homeless people from every jurisdiction in the City of San Francisco.

You may respond to this WARRANT by providing real solutions to homelessness such as low-income housing, living-wage jobs, treatment on demand health care, and affordable childcare.

## THE HOMELESS HOROSCOPE

**by Nate Bernhardt**



**PISCES (February 19 - March 20)**
You will experience a profound insight into the meaning of life soon, when the number of papers you sell on a street corner equals the wind chill factor.

**ARIES (March 21- April 19)**
You will find a $50 bill in front of a shoe store, but they won't let you in because you are barefoot.

**TAURUS (April 20 - May 20)**
While standing in front of a store holding a sign, you will get a ticket for loitering, and the judge will sentence you to stand in front of the store holding a sign confessing, "I stood in front of this store holding up a sign."

**GEMINI (May 21 - June 20)**
You will cross the street to avoid a panhandler and get a ticket for jaywalking.

**CANCER (June 21- July 22)**
You'll solve your personal hygiene problems soon, when you accidentally walk through a carwash.

**LEO (July 23 - August 22)**
You spend so much time standing on the sidewalk, you will reinvent hopscotch.

**VIRGO (August 23 - September 22)**
You will win the hearts of homeless men worldwide when you design a line of dumpsters with attached urinals.

**LIBRA (September 23 - October 23)**
Congratulations! You are destined to be listed in the Guinness Book of World Records when you fit 4,000 aluminum cans into one shopping cart.

**SCORPIO (October 24 - November 22)**
You must realize, Scorpio, that when someone asks, "What's your sign?" it's not an appropriate response to whip out a chunk of cardboard that says: Will Work For Food.

**SAGITTARIUS (November 23 - December 21)**
The cops will be so disgusted with your loitering and trespassing that you will wake up in an alley soon with a Denver boot on your right foot.

**CAPRICORN (December 22 - January 19)**
Prepare yourself for a shock when you realize that not everyone you see entering Market St. Station is there to use the bathroom.

**AQUARIUS (January 20 - February 18)**
If you don't stop drinking so much they are going to move the Betty Ford clinic to your alley.

## San Diego Police

*from page 21*

executive director of PERT (Psychiatric Emergency Response Teams). "Our teams deal specifically with the mentally ill, and our teams operate with San Diego P.D. and other law enforcement agencies throughout the county. We have 14 teams spread throughout the county, so they're spread fairly thin at any given point.

"A lot of people have said, 'When a situation comes up where there's a mentally ill individual who is in a crisis, why can't the PERT team be there?' One of the reasons is, there aren't a lot of PERT teams. Another reason that a PERT team isn't always able to help in a situation like that is that the officers or deputies involved have to make sure that the scene is safe before the PERT team even comes in."

Ramirez finally was allowed a few minutes to defend himself. "We're here not because we oppose the police. We believe that the police department is needed. We believe the actions that Chief Bejarano's taking are a step forward. Most of the community members of this city are demanding that justice be done in various cases here. We're here to bring you closer to what is happening in our city, because you have to understand that there's a problem going on. There's a lot of shootings; there are human rights violations happening, and we're wanting to find a solution.

"We're not against the police department; we respect those individuals that protect our streets, but we are against police brutality, and we are against human rights violations, and we will continue to be against those things."

By the time public comment was allowed, many had had to leave, but many others had remained throughout the day.

Ann Merril voiced her approval of "improving communications skills," and said this should include "money sufficient for community policing." Police, she said, should know, as far as possible, everyone in a neighborhood. "If they'd used two of those victims' names, they might be alive. Knowing a man's name gives you a chance to deal with him. Knowing someone in a neighborhood who is a drunk and goes into the wrong house, and being able to talk with him, may save some lives. They should understand and learn the idiosyncrasies of the people who live with them. Choose men who can remember people and treat them as individuals."

Ronald Taylor, a middle-aged African-American man, said he wanted to address the issue of excessive force. "I used to think that I could change the world, that I could solve all the problems and make them all go away," Taylor said. "As I've matured, I've also become aware that I was a little naive.... I think excessive force really can damage people's lives far more than the effort of having these kinds of workshops. I think the problem isn't from 90 percent of the officers that we've talked about here today; it's about the 10 percent who make bad decisions, and allow incidents to escalate."

When police victims suffer "humiliation and degradation," Taylor said, "they often find they have nowhere to go. So I ask that you look at how we police ourselves, determine what level of accountability you might want to accept for the lives of others, who might not even have been born as a result of these incidents."

Rev. Glen Allison was still there at that late hour. "They say that progress is only made when we are willing to leave our comfort zone," said Allison. "I think that the workshop today has been a step in that direction. Our comfort zone is 'policy.' We like to talk about it; we like to make it. Our comfort zone is 'training.' We like to exonerate all those who are trained. Our comfort zone is 'weaponry,' various kinds and what they can do.

"But when we begin to look at psychology, the psychology of individual officers and the psychology of mass crowds, as took place, then we get a little more uncomfortable and uncertain. When we begin to look at the culture of the police department — and it is a culture, a subculture — we get even more uncomfortable; and finally we get to the morality and ethics, which I have not heard mentioned much here at all, and we are really uncomfortable.

"To me the Midway shooting incident is an excellent metaphor for where we are today in San Diego, especially in our comfort level and discomfort level. I hope we have an opportunity to use this metaphor as an opportunity to make this a turning point.

"Mr. Mathis, you said you weren't there. And I agree, you have to have been there. I was there. I was on Midway Drive. I saw what took place. I've discussed it with the Chief of Police; I have testified for the detective investigating, and I intend to continue to, because in my opinion this was a shooting which was not justified. This was an avoidable shooting.

"If I am correct that this was an avoidable shooting, then we are in the area of ethics. And morality. There was a wrong done. And if a wrong was done, then my way of moving away from wrong is to admit you're wrong and begin to move on in a different direction.

"I think that once we admit our culpability, if there is culpability, and not simply close the ranks again and say, one more time, 'Well, it was all justified' — and use a hazy overhead shot to say it was — then I suggest we are back to square one. We have to use this as a turning point. Or to hope that we will."

# Meet the Future Homeless of Santa Cruz

*from page one*

housing from its rightful owners so the City can build low-cost housing on the lot, while losing housing units in the process?

What is the real deal, intelligent people ask, when the Seaside Company, the owner and operator of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, owns 35 empty units in the same neighborhood. If these Seaside Company units or a few of the empty lots were developed, no one need be displaced or made homeless, just moved over to their new digs.

The City of Santa Cruz is quick to admit that the Seaside Company can tie them up in court for years if they tried to use eminent domain against the amusement park owner. So city officials need to take land from those with less resources.

The families that live in the Dolphin-Lee were instrumental last year in helping defeat another City redevelopment scheme that would have demolished low-income housing and dislocated mostly Latino citizens from the Beach Flats/South of Laurel area near the Beach Boardwalk. They organized, attended meetings, and did not allow the alteration of their neighborhood or the displacement of over 20 families in the immediate area or the emptying of another 162 units of affordable housing in an adjacent area.

Under that plan, called the Beach Flats/South of Laurel Plan and the Third Street Realignment project, any small property owners would have had their property legally snatched eminent-domained) then also. The main beneficiary of this failed scheme would have been the Seaside Company.

Without these organized Hispanic families, it seems inevitable that this plan will raise its ugly head again, complete with all its ugly front men. City government will break the backbone of the resistance by emptying the Dolphin and the Lee apartments under the benign auspices of low-cost housing.

They will knock down low-cost housing to put up less low-cost housing in its place. Only in America, folks! But especially in Santa Cruz where the word "Progressive" has become synonymous with "speaks with forked tongue."

I spoke with a single parent named Graciella and her 5 year old daughter, Hess, a few months ago. She wanted things to stay the same in her neighborhood; she treasured her security there. She has no relatives here.

Out of her minimum wage earnings after taxes, she pays $5.00 a day childcare for Hess ($10.00 a day if Hess is ill and cannot go to school), her share of the $525 per month rent, food for the two of them, and the clothing and shoes they need for school and work. She shares her small apartment with a single roommate who does not have children.

Graciella does not have a car, walks to work, and her child goes to school on the bus. Although she does not earn very much money for her full-time work, she says things were much worse for her and her child in Mexico where she could not even afford to buy her child a small piece of cake or a treat let alone the necessities of life. She does not have time to make friends as her work takes her days and her child takes all the rest of her time, not to mention housework and meals.

Her daughter is perfectly behaved, with sparkling eyes. She is in kindergarten, gets good grades, is learning English and is very shy. Her daughter may not talk a lot, but her smile speaks volumes. She smiles at me through the whole interview. At one point, when her mother tells me that she is dedicated to her daughter, her daughter gets an impish grin on her face and says she does not let her mother have a boyfriend. I ask her why.

"Because I need her," she says very seriously, and then goes back to smiling while hugging her mom.

Graciella is very worried about this redevelopment project because she remembers a time when there was not enough work for her and she could not pay her rent. No one made her leave her apartment and everyone helped her.

"Mexican people help each other," she says, and she wants to stay where she feels cared for.

She has a close relationship with the manager of the Dolphin, Maria Gutierrez, who she says has helped her very much during the last two years. She is relaxed and confident in this setting, and I hate to think of her and Hess outside this haven.

She describes her sense of belonging in this way: "No one stares at me here or treats me like I am stupid. I live without welfare or food stamps. I can work and take care of myself and know that others watch out for my little girl and I. I do not drink or go out. I am a good mother, why can't people leave us alone so we can keep doing well?"

The manager, Maria Gutierrez, expressed great sadness recently when she saw that some of the tenants were falling for the sales pitch for the new housing. She said, "When it is too late, they will realize the trick to get them out is going to leave them in a grave situation, and I am especially concerned about the children. "

## When Mercy Is Evicted

*from page two*

that is if housing could be found at all. Under State law, the City would only be required to pay a stipend to dislocated residents, a stipend that in most cases would not be sufficient to pay the higher rents found everywhere but the Dolphin-Lee.

The City of Santa Cruz pays Mercy Charities Housing a $60,000 retainer. For this incentive, the nonprofit agency gets an exclusive contract for all development of affordable housing using Redevelopment funds. Mercy Charities Housing does not go through a competitive bidding process. And when the project is built, and all loans have been paid back, it is wholly owned, not by the City of Santa Cruz, not by owner-tenants, but by the developer itself, Mercy Charities Housing. The agency is then required to keep the rents affordable.

Mercy Charities Housing does not provide a dime of funding. It is a developer who will not even begin to break ground until the last dime of funding is in a construction account. As a nonprofit, it administers its housing through its own management agency, Mercy Housing.

Local attorney Ed Frey said, "Mercy is owned by the Sisters of Mercy, a $300 million tax dodge for rich Catholics. They administer projects like this across the nation and their special chosen ones make a lot of big salaries as part of the process."

Frey is currently representing an elderly couple who were dropped during another "housing upgrade" done recently at a local trailer park. "Mercy Housing has been anything but merciful to my clients," he said. To perform the upgrade, the couple had to be vacated for six months, and were told they could move back in as long as they were tenants in good standing.

"Mercy offered to pre-screen the couple so they could be assured they would be eligible to get back in," said Frey.

Although they were approved during the pre-screening process, when the six months were up, they were told to get out. And the new place was not ready yet. Then, they were told they did not pass the final screening process, although "the application they submitted was identical to the one they submitted for the pre-screening."

David Foster, representing Mercy Housing, explained during the unlawful detainer hearing: "The initial screening only determined if they were income eligible for their household size. The final screening was more extensive, including credit checks and other criteria. They were turned down by the final screening."

Mercy Housing also charges a 15% management charge — double the standard rate for commercially managed properties.

What will happen to the 200 people now housed at Dolphin-Lee? If one dollar of federal money is used, anyone will be able to apply for the new housing. Current residents will be given "preference," but if one of their household members has a criminal conviction for violence or drugs, or they have been issued an unlawful detainer, they will most likely be turned down. If they are illegal immigrants or if their income is insufficient, or their household is too large, or their credit rating is not good enough, will Mercy Housing readmit them?

"It's done on a case by case basis," says Elisabeth Vogl of Mercy Housing.

Santa Cruz City Councilmember Tim Fitzmaurice, who is pushing this project, believes that state guidelines, which do not include immigration status requirements, will prevail. For the relocation certainly, but what about for the new housing? The devil is in the details.

Fitzmaurice fervently believes the Dolphin housing to be unfit for raising children. "The Dolphin is not a good place," he piously told residents.

Despite his claims of substandard housing, the units have been inspected and are not red-tagged.

Meanwhile, Dolphin tenant Maria, who lives in a studio with three other people (and an extended family who, at times, swell occupancy to seven), must make a choice. In speaking to the City staff and the Redevelopment Agency, Maria has been promised a lot. But if she moves, and does not qualify for the new housing, or if she moves, and the project is never built, she and her family could face homelessness.

"They told me I could get a three bedroom apartment," said Maria. "Yes, I would move to get that."

## Models of Respite Care

*from page one*

care for homeless people. We have appealed to the leaders and the members of our community to act with compassion toward the people among us who are hurt or sick and have no place to rest and heal.

Providing respite care for the homeless is not just a moral imperative, it's a matter of economics. Often, hospitals find it necessary to keep homeless patients a day or two longer than those who have homes. Even then, when people are discharged from the hospital to the streets or shelters, they are far more likely to end up back in the hospital. And hospitals are very expensive places.

There are several successful models for how to provide respite care for the homeless community. In the mid-1980s, both Boston and Washington, D.C., organized respite houses where homeless people could recuperate from medical problems.

The Barbara McInnis House in Boston and Christ House in Washington, D.C., are organized on a medical model. Staffed with doctors and nurses, they can take in homeless people who are discharged from hospitals and still need a lot of supervision and care. Christ House has 32 beds and is funded by HUD, foundation grants and donations. Barbara McInnis House is funded by Medicare and Medicaid.

In the early 1990s, Chicago opened up a 60-bed Interfaith House for the same population of homeless people newly discharged from hospitals, but their respite house is organized more on a social service model. They have nurses and a part-time physician as well as case managers, an employment counselor and a substance abuse counselor. Interfaith House is funded by HUD, the City of Chicago and various foundations and religious organizations.

The Barbara McInnis House in Boston now has a 75-bed facility, providing 24-hour nursing care, meals, case management and even transportation to other facilities for care that is not available on site. The patients are referred by hospitals, shelters, emergency departments and outpatient clinics. The operators point out that, "Admissions to the program often prevent the need for hospitalization or decrease the length of a hospital inpatient stay."

The Barbara McInnis House is staffed with doctors and nurses and is more heavily based on a medical model and takes sicker people than some of the other respite facilities. The respite care shelters in Chicago and Washington, D.C., while also providing medical care, put more emphasis on comprehensive social services.

All of them are designed to "fill the gap between hospital and health" according to Jim O'Connell of Boston's McInnis House. He points out that "this kind of facility turns out to be incredibly cost effective for the hospital community."

The need for such a respite facility here in the East Bay is clear. While David Kears, director of Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, told *Street Spirit* just last week that he was not aware that this is a problem, that "no one has come back to me saying here's a gap," workers in the field of health care and homelessness have been struggling with it for years.

Hospital discharge workers scramble for vouchers to provide a few days in a hotel room for their homeless patients. Some shelters, such as East Oakland Community Project (EOCP) set aside some 24-hour beds, but they impose a one-week limit.

Now is the time to establish a respite care facility to serve homeless people in the East Bay, and we have the opportunity. The Alameda County Board of Supervisors has designated its entire money from the lawsuits against tobacco companies for health care; that will be about $18 million a year for the next 20 years (although other pending suits could change the amount ultimately available). Some of that money should be allotted to establish a real respite facility.

Through political action, the federal government must be pressured to restore the massive cuts that social programs have suffered. Funding from HUD, foundations and community sources must be solicited. Hospitals will certainly put resources into this since it will save them money.

We urge the homeless and health care organizations to develop a plan. We urge the community to advocate for its implementation. We must make it possible for those who are sick and homeless to heal and return to useful and meaningful lives.

It is morally and economically right. It is in everybody's best interest. And it will surely save some lives and prevent much unnecessary human suffering.

For a full description of Interfaith House, see the November/December, 1998, issue of *Continuum*, published by the American Society for Social Work Administration in Healthcare, (312) 422-3774.



Lydia Gans photo

# I Think of the FBI Men

by Mary Rudge

I think of the FBI men watching the film
they used to take of us
standing outside San Quentin
in cinemascopic scenery
film set designed by sunset
brilliant the water, light on stone wall.
How many times they watched it looking for
clues of what? There I was, and Martha and
Anna Maria, and Darla with her child
his dark skin glowing in the silver wheelchair
some black onyx shone, some precious jewel in
a silver setting, except for the football helmet
protecting his head. We were Quaker and
Catholic and other peaceable people.
And I think how it must be to see us pray
reel after reel
light flickering
on the silver screen against the stone wall.
I wonder what weapon they thought
our litany
and if they knew what power was pit
against mind that could will death
to any human creature! The ways to kill
like movies I have seen, the capsule dropped,
the lethal dose, gas chamber, chair wired,
electricity. Those long dark times
men killed for us — good of society — they said.
I wonder if watching those prayers changed
their lives — the ones who watched the film
and if I am some marked face now
in FBI files. Does it mean
I'm wanted or unwanted
not found wanting some compassion
praying for Robillard, for all their names
too long a litany for one poem
too long and sad
a litany.

## conditions poor

by Randy Fingland

death rattles cold air
through the street speakers
winter almost here
leaves drained from sight lines
birdsong headed south
coffee, or something stronger,
needed to heat the chilled
weary bones
climbing from doorways
even the pigeons enter
to share a space
out of the wind

## The Smile

by Michael Creedon

Today on the street
A black couple sitting
Leaning on a wall
Asked me for spare change.
I had none.
They thanked me for
the smile.

## COURAGE

by Claire J. Baker

A breakthrough
Began with the last
Sip of brew
From a hofbrau mug:
Peaked with Luther Burbank
Growing a new flower species
And naming it after
A courageous street person
Like you.

## Changing Trails

by Claire J. Baker

Finding myself captive
in a capitalistic prison
I break shackles, smash walls,
leave dull rubble behind.
Traveling lightly, I arrive
for the first time
in these coastal hills.

Since you walk here too,
let's walk awhile together.
We can nibble fresh carrots,
tell our life stories, speak of
aspirations not yet fulfilled;
sip wine or apple juice
before another trail begins
for each of us,
as is the way of life.

## Luxury

by Michael Creedon

I make a painting —
Perhaps I make two —
In the safety of my apartment
It's something to do.
But out in the street
The people patrol.
They lack the luxury.
The homeless are hungry,
Looking for cans,
And they don't eat health food.
They're scarfing hot dogs
While my conscience explodes.
I make a painting —
On a good day, three.
It makes me feel happy,
It makes me feel free.
But the people on the street
Lack the luxury.

**I wonder if watching those prayers changed their lives — the ones who watched the film and if I am some marked face now in FBI files.**

## Behind A Bush

by Michael Creedon

I'm crouching behind a bush in the park at
MacArthur & Broadway in the middle of
The night where the flashing blue/red lights
And two police officers are hassling someone
I don't want to turn into me.
I can hear the staccato car radio crackling.
I believe the problem is the gentleman has
No I.D. I can't see what color he is
Or I am
But I don't have any I.D. either
And I prefer the cold insecure outdoors
To the warm security routine of
Another night in a jail cell.
I'm hiding behind a bush.

## The Sleep of the Just

by Will Walker

may come easiest to the young, who have known
less opportunity to trespass, lie and cheat.
They play simpler games, more often
with clear rules that involve running
from place to place with less chance
of bumping into mayhem, injury, or despair.
The sleep of the just requires
a conscience clear as crystal,
but it's helped beyond measure
by more common things: a bed of your own
in a place of your own. Clean sheets.
Silence. A snug roof. A full stomach.
Freedom from pain. Warm feet.

## CHARADE

by Bob Slaymaker

Following politics
is like watching
pro wrestling.
We all know it's fake,
but still we watch

Some even rush
to ringside
and join in

*only to find*

*only to find*

the joke's
on us

## Madness Manifesto

by George Kauffman

Nobody is mad anymore.
Everybody is certified sane.

All our poetry is the same.
All our politics is the same.
All our art is the same.
All our religion is the same.

Look at all the sane people.
These people brought us
Vietnam
Afghanistan
The Mideast
The Persian Gulf
Sarajevo
Kosovo
Chechnya.

Do you still feel safe?
Do you still feel sane?

The dead are screaming in their
Graves. Even their tombstones
Cry out. The dead are tired of
Being dead, they have died too
Many times before.

Madness comes to those who want it.
Confront creeping sanity with insane
Slogans and art. Declare youself,
America!
Go Mad And Save The World!

## Cisco Norton, Center Field

by Michael Creedon

Cisco Norton
Played center field
For the Visalia Oaks
In the Fifties.
It was professional baseball
And he earned $500 a month.
Now he's catching spare change
On Shattuck Avenue
In downtown Berkeley.
He lost a leg in Korea
When he stepped on a mine.

Cisco Norton
With a beer-belly
But he really doesn't drink
Much beer. He's still
In good shape.
Just not gonna make it
To the big leagues
Is all.

## Notes from the Wall

by Robert Stevens

Somewhere between hell and
crystalline blue space, the rain, the
cars, and the people, people, people
are drawn habitually to Pacific
Avenue's sanephony orchestra.

From sunup to sundown we lone
individuals migrate and mingle,
work, and pretend that one is not more
unique than the other.

We smile, then glance at the clock,
enduring the time spent
being one of the grinning mob
aching for genuine laughter or
a sweet interlude of sadness
and undeniable tears.

Home is madness and kind mirrors,
the sanctuary of self and all things
pertinent to the ego; a softer place
to hide
and heal.

## NOT A GOOD WEEK, BUT I'M NOT HOMELESS

by Claire J. Baker

My sore back jerked all to hell
by a chiropractor;
a rugged poetry planning meeting —
far from poetic bliss;
a neuroma on my big toe:
extreme pain walking:
hard little lump needs surgery
(how long will Kaiser put me off).

A woman more financially enhanced
than myself said she had no money to
buy my fair-priced book of poems;
am disappointed in my growth
as a human being. The irony:
at 6:45 p.m. as I list complaints
the homeless couple that befriended
me and my stalled car are preparing
for bed under a Berkeley park bridge,
early winter coming on —
their two service dogs will
press warm against their backs.

## Not Long Ago

by Claire J. Baker

It is winter. I am born in the snow
drifted onto our back porch.
Already I can walk, talk,
read the dictionary,
wash my own diapers,
serve mother drinks.
Already I am a fetching
morsel for my stepfather's
drunken advances that set
me back.
And I am only a kid
born in the snow
not long ago.